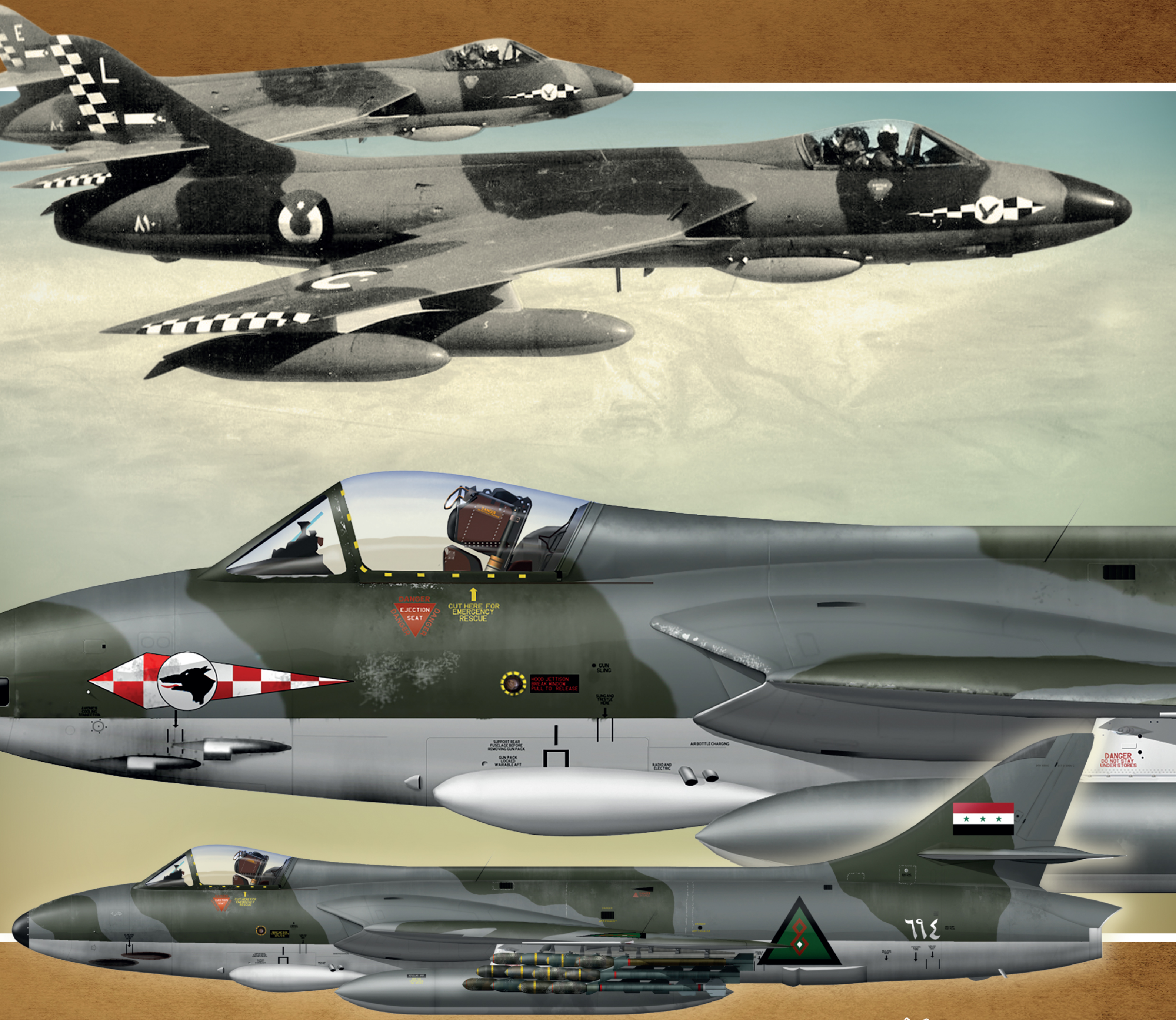
– MIDDLE EAST @ WAR No.7 –

HAWKER HUNTERS AT WAR

IRAQ AND JORDAN, 1958-1967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Tom Cooper & Patricia Salti

MIDDLE EAST @ WAR
SERIES

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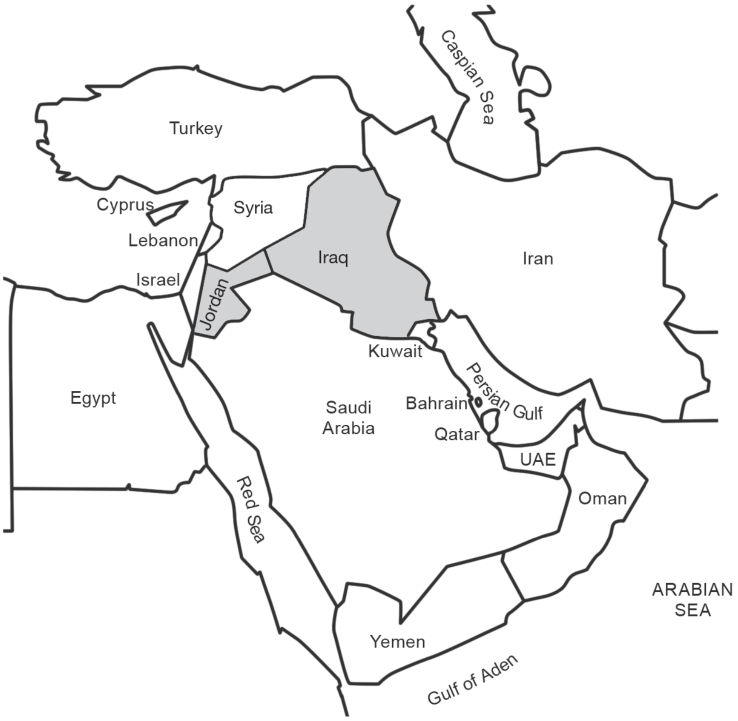

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ABBREVIATIONS

AAA	anti-aircraft artillery
AB	air base
BAF	Belgian Air Force
C-in-C	commander in chief
CO	commanding officer
EFUAC	Eastern Front United Arab Command
GOC	general officer commanding
IAF	Indian Air Force
IAP	international airport
IDF	Israeli Defence Force
IDF/AF	Israeli Defence Force/Air Force
IrAF	Iraqi Air Force (official designation since 1958)
KLU	Koninklijke Luchtmacht (Royal Netherlands Air Force)
MBT	main battle tank
MiG	Mikoyan i Gurevich (the design bureau led by Artyom Ivanovich Mikoyan and Mikhail Iosifovich Gurevich, also known as OKB-155 or MMZ 'Zenit')
NWC	National Water Carrier (in Israel)
OC	officer in command
OCU	Operational Conversion Unit
R-3S	Soviet short-range anti-aircraft missile, ASCC codename AA-2 Atoll
RAF	Royal Air Force (United Kingdom)
RJAF	Royal Jordanian Air Force
SAM	surface-to-air missile
Sqn	squadron
SyAAF	Syrian Arab Republic Air Force
UAC	United Arab Command
UARAF	United Arab Republic Air Force designation of Egyptian and Syrian air arms 1958–1962, and of Egyptian air arm until 1969
USAF	United States Air Force

1

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

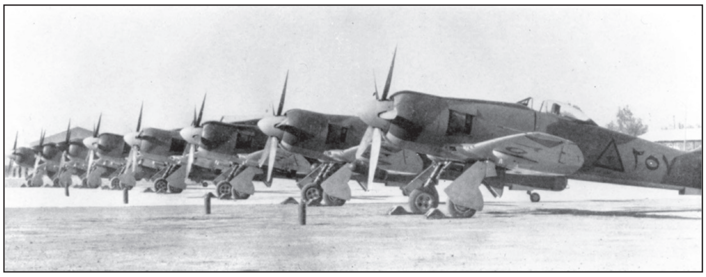
At a first look, the history of the Hawker Hunter jet in service in Iraq and Jordan might appear not to have much in common, as if not requiring an entire volume to tell. Actually, the two countries and their air forces share not only a mutual border but also much of their history. Carved out of several former Ottoman provinces by the pens of British and French diplomats within the frame of the Sykes-Picot agreement, during the first 20 years of their existence, the kingdoms of Iraq and Transjordan were heavily dependent upon British assistance for their survival. Their militaries were established with British help and equipped with the Hunter at a time when they not only maintained very close ties with London, but also during the formative years of their air forces. In both countries, the Hunter was to see a long, colourful and action-packed service – especially during the first 10 years after their delivery, when they represented the backbone of both the Iraqi and Jordanian air forces. While Hunters of the Royal Air Force (RAF) flew combat air patrols during the Suez War of 1956, Iraqi and Jordanian Hunters not only became the first aircraft of this type to see combat, but became involved in a number of fierce air combats with the Israeli Defence Force/Air Force (IDF/AF).

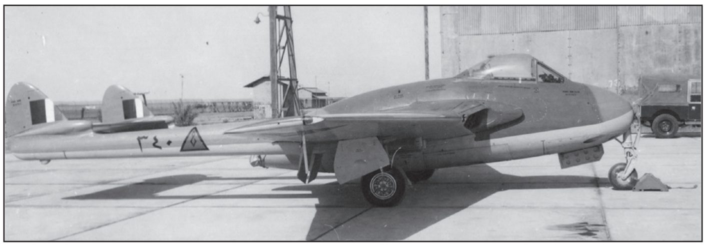
IRAQIS GEARING UP

The Iraqi Air Force is the oldest of all Arab air arms. Established as the Royal Iraqi Air Force (RIrAF) on 22 April 1931, it was almost completely destroyed during the British intervention in that country in 1941. It had re-emerged by the early 1950s as a relatively seasoned air arm that maintained very close ties to the RAF. This went so far that not only were its uniforms, equipment, traditions and training essentially British, but once British troops officially vacated Iraq in 1955, the RIrAF – since November 1954 under the command of Brigadier General Abd el-Kad'm ash-Shieh Abadi – also took over the task of 'air policing' the northern part of the country, inhabited by Kurds who were nearly always in opposition to the central government in Baghdad.

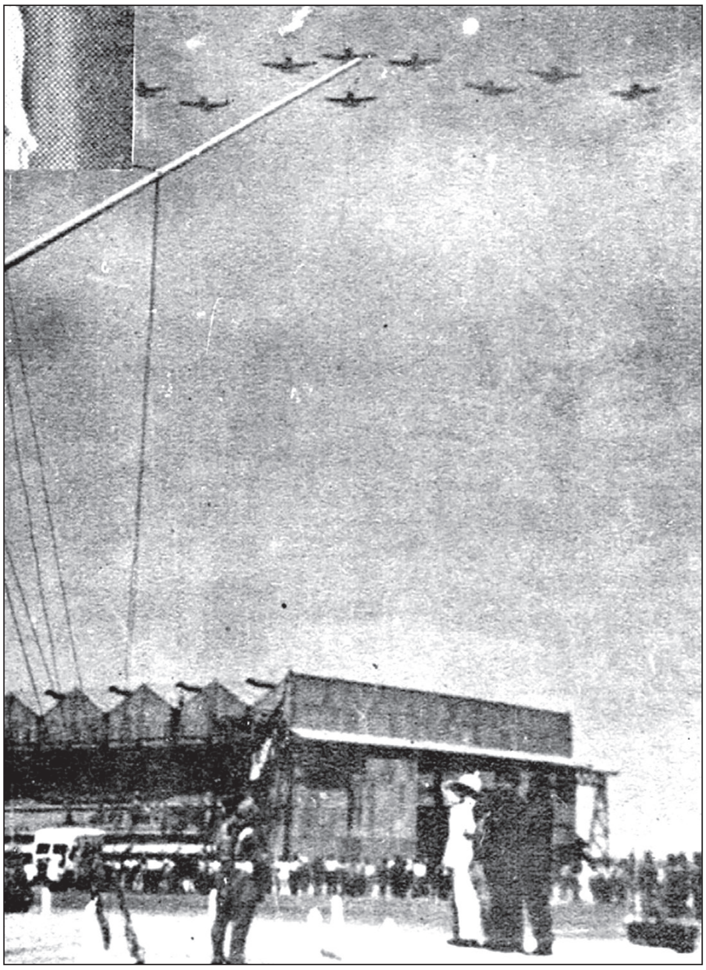
Good relations with London and continuously increasing oil income gave Iraq the ability to acquire a sizeable number of relatively modern military aircraft. Between 1949 and 1954, the RIrAF purchased a total of 55 Hawker Fury FB.Mk 11 fighter-bombers and five Fury T.Mk 20 conversion trainers, 12 de Havilland Vampire FB.Mk 52 fighter-bombers and 10 Vampire T.Mk 55 conversion trainers, 13 de Havilland Venom F.Mk 1s (reconditioned to FB.Mk 50 fighter-bomber standard before delivery) and six Venom FB.Mk 50s (mainly used as sources of spares).

In 1956, the RIrAF adopted a five-year development plan, which envisaged a significant expansion, including the training of no less than 200 pilots and 40 navigators in the UK over a period of two years. This was to be followed by the establishment of three new fighter and two bomber squadrons by 1960 (for a total of six fighter squadrons with 96 aircraft, and two bomber squadrons with 24 aircraft). Special arrangements were made to ensure that sufficient vacancies would be available for Iraqi students at RAF flying training schools to meet the two-year programme, which began in January 1957. However, due to recruiting and financial difficulties, only about 120 Iraqi students had arrived by March and May 1958, including 20 already qualified pilots and 25 NCO

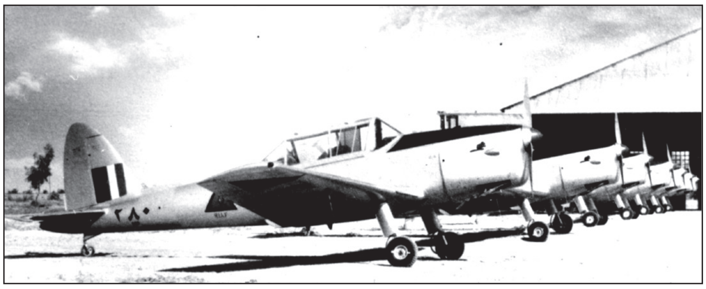

No fewer than 55 Fury FB.Mk 11 fighter-bombers acquired from the UK formed the backbone of the Royal Iraqi Air Force, starting from 1948. While they were forward deployed in Egypt and Syria during the latter stages of the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 1949, several were subsequently donated to Morocco and the rest saw intensive service during fighting against Kurds in northern Iraq well into the 1960s. (Albert Grandolini Collection)


The Vampire FB.Mk 52 entered service with No. 5 Squadron, RIrAF, in August 1953. While a few were lost in training accidents and during fighting with Kurds in the early 1960s, Iraqi single-seat Vampires were withdrawn from service and two-seaters were donated to Somalia in 1964. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)

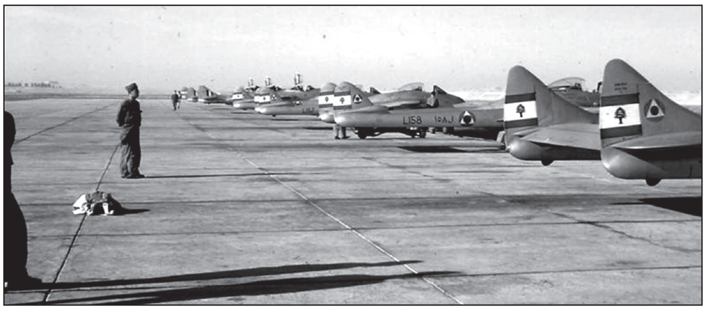
The Venom FB.Mk 50 entered service with No. 6 Squadron in August 1953. The type remained in service well into the 1960s. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)



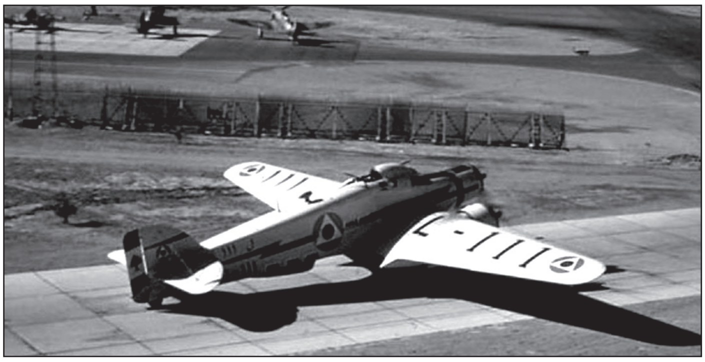
On 2 May 1955, the RIrAF officially took over the former RAF Shoibiyah airfield, near Basrah. A major air parade was staged on the occasion, including a flypast by a number of aircraft. This strategically positioned air base was subsequently renamed 'Wahda' (meaning 'Freedom' in Arabic). (Albert Grandolini Collection)



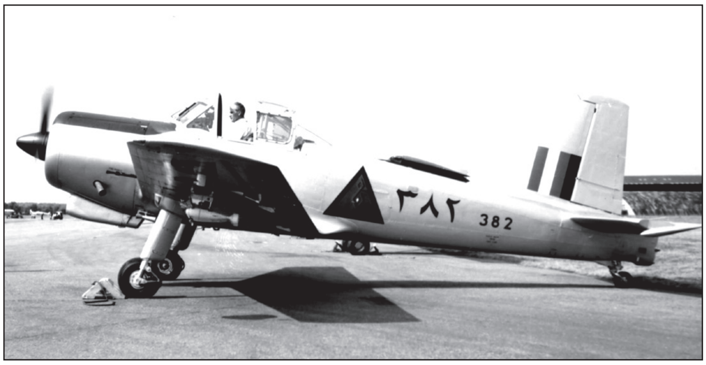
Taken during a parade at Rashid airfield in 1955, this photograph shows a row of seven Chipmunk T.Mk 20 (alternative reports cite T.Mk 51) training aircraft (with one in the foreground wearing serial number 280). The RIrAF acquired a total of 15 such aircraft from 1951, and they served with the Flying College well into the 1960s. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



In 1957, a sizeable delegation from the Lebanese Air Force visited Habbaniyah airfield, in western Iraq, as well as Baghdad. A row of Lebanese Vampires are shown at Habbaniyah. (Vatche Mitilian Collection)



One of four Lebanese Savoia-Marchetti SM.79 bomber-transports, used to carry Colonel Boustany on a visit to Habbaniyah in 1955. Note the prominent insignia on this aircraft, as well as two RIrAF Furies and a Venom in the upper-left corner of the photograph. (Vatche Mitilian Collection)



A pre-delivery photograph of a Provost T.Mk 53 trainer destined for Iraq. The RIrAF acquired at least 15 such aircraft from Great Britain, beginning in 1954. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

ground technicians. At the request of the Iraqi government, and in accordance with the terms of the 'Special Agreement' reached between Baghdad and London in 1955, a team of RAF instructional personnel had been established in Iraq to assist in organising and training the RIrAF to meet its planned expansion programme and to enable the air force to fulfil its allotted tasks. Headed by Group Captain Wells (RAF), who was also appointed Air Adviser to Iraq and the official adviser to the Chief of General Staff, Iraq Armed Forces, this team comprised 24 officers and 16 NCOs in various branches and trades. The team became instrumental in reorganising the RIrAF's supply and maintenance system, such that it was, based on similar lines to the RAF system, and establishing facilities for obtaining supplies from the UK on a government-to-government basis. Finally, following the acquisition of the first two radar stations (apparently one each of Marconi Type 13 and Type 14) from the UK, training for Iraqi radar crews was provided by the International Aeroradio company in Iraq, in cooperation with an RAF signals unit, which brought Type E training equipment for this purpose to Iraq.[1]

THE HUNTER ARRIVES

In early 1956, the Iraqi government expressed its intention to obtain 10 Hunter F.Mk 6 fighters equipped with Mk 5 gunsights and Avon 121 engines. Related negotiations encountered considerable problems: the British were only willing to sell the Hunter F.Mk 4s that were surplus to RAF requirements, while the Iraqis wanted these to at least be equipped with more advanced Mk 8 gunsights and rails for 88mm unguided rockets. Baghdad also did not want its payments to start until April 1957. Because F.Mk 6s equipped with Mk 8 gunsights were not considered 'surplus to RAF requirements', and doubtful of the Iraqi ability to pay for the aircraft and necessary

The first group of IrAF pilots with their British instructors during the delivery ceremony at Chivenor in January 1967. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

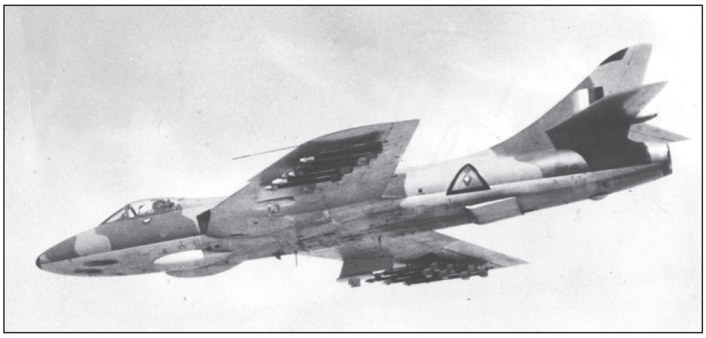
spares, the British embassy in Baghdad and the Air Ministry in London both voiced their doubts that such aircraft could be delivered at all. Negotiations for the deal continued well into 1956, even after the first group of seven Iraqi pilots arrived in the UK to start training. It was only later that year that – in light of the Iraqi standpoint concerning the Suez War – London changed its mind and in February 1957 expressed its readiness to provide Iraq with five Hunter F.Mk 6s and a three-month spares package.[2]

The first group of 10 Iraqi pilots underwent conversion courses at the Hunter OCU at RAF Chivenor in England, starting in October 1956. Throughout 1957, six additional pilots and 25 NCO technicians completed their training in the UK. Led by Squadron Leader Arif Abd ar-Razzaq, the 16 pilots included Lieutenants Muna'am Abed al-Ameer, Nimma Abdullah ad-Dulaymi, Ahmed al-Glabi, Izzat, Fahmi Jalal, Mohammad Jassem, Gharib Mahmmoud, Mumtazz Abdel Ali as-Saydoon, Mufeed Sayd, Khalid Jerjis Sarah, Hamid Sha'ban at-Tikriti and Jamal al-Windawi.[3] All of these had previously completed conversion courses in the UK and possessed experience of flying de Havilland Vampires and Venoms. Thus, their training proceeded at the expected pace and without major problems. However, on 20 November 1956, one of the Hunters slated for delivery to Iraq – RIrAF serial number 399 – crashed during a training mission over the English Channel. Despite a safe ejection, its pilot, 1st Lieutenant G. Mahmmoud, died of hypothermia after remaining in the cold sea for too long. Following hasty preparations, the first five Hunters were delivered to Iraq in April 1957.[4]

Although short of the finances required to pay for additional aircraft due to a Syrian decision to cut the flow of oil through the pipeline connecting central Iraq with the port of Tartus, Baghdad still intended to equip an entire squadron with Hunters, and continued negotiating the acquisition of 10 additional jets. In July 1957, Washington began signalling its preparedness to provide financial support to Iraq through an Offshore Purchase Contract, in the same way the US government financed the production of many Hunters delivered to the RAF and various NATO partners. While it remains unclear if the US indeed provided such financial support, following additional negotiations with London, in early December 1957, Baghdad signalled its decision to pay the full price for 10 aircraft and a three-month spares package, beginning in April 1958. Under some pressure from the RIrAF, which expressed a wish for 10 Hunters to make a flypast during Army Day on 6 January 1958, London reacted swiftly. Ferried by British pilots via France and Turkey, all 10 Hunters had arrived in Iraq by the end of December 1957, when Squadron Leader ar-Razzaq reported that the re-equipped No. 6 Squadron was operational with the type.[5]

One of the Iraqi Hunter F.Mk 6s shortly after delivery, while being towed into a hangar at Habbaniyah AB in western central Iraq. (David Nicolle Collection)

Working hand-in-hand with the 'Hunter Servicing Party' – the RAF servicing team consisting of one officer and 27 NCOs, and based at Habbaniyah with the task of assisting the RIrAF in maintaining its new aircraft – ar-Razzaq put his unit through a rigorous flying training programme, his pilots accumulating 120 150 hours on average during the first half of 1958. Of these, eight were



One of the then still brand-new RIrAF Hunter F.Mk 6s armed with 24 3in unguided rockets during a joint RAF-IrAF exercise in early 1958. This was the standard air-to-ground configuration for the type at the time. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)

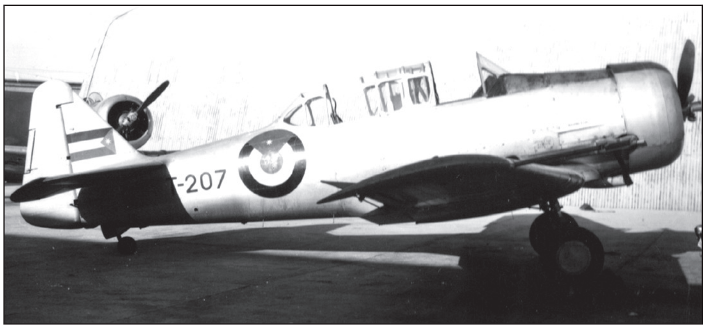
by night. Regular live-firing exercises were also staged, with pilots mainly training in air-to-ground attacks, although in March 1958, an air-to-air gunnery and manoeuvring exercise was also staged.[6]

JORDANIAN BEGINNINGS

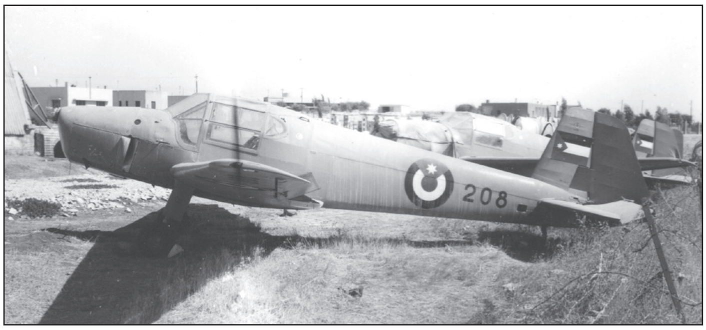
The Royal Jordanian Air Force (RJAF) came into being as a flying service of Jordan's Arab Legion, or the Arab Legion Air Force (ALAF), officered and completely armed by the British during the late 1940s. Jordan initially lacked the money to support an air force, but in 1948 it signed a Treaty of Friendship with the UK, under the provisions of which the RAF occupied bases at Amman and Mafraq, and provided considerable assistance to the fledgling service. The first budget for the ALAF was officially granted in January 1951, and the force – initially equipped with a miscellany of de Havilland Tiger Moths and Dragon Rapides, Percival Proctor Mk Vs and Auster AOPs – was under the command of Wing Commander Fisher (RAF) from 1950 until 1953. Right from the start, the flying branch of the Jordanian military caught the attention of the young Prince Hussein II of Jordan, and Queen Zein of Jordan and the British authorities attempted to prevent Fisher from helping him to develop an interest in flying. Hussein persisted and Fisher continued providing flight lessons for the rest of his tenure in Jordan – on condition that the future king keep this strictly to himself.

In May 1950, No. 6 Squadron RAF deployed a detachment of Vampire FB.Mk 5s to Mafraq airfield, to carry out trials on a compressed sand runway. The RAF pilots put up an air display for King Abdullah Bin Talal of Jordan on 9 June. Impressed by the jets, the king – who was supposedly interested in obtaining a squadron of legendary Supermarine Spitfires – suddenly changed his opinion. On 1 January 1951, Air Marshal Sir John Baker, C-in-C RAF Middle East, arrived in Amman to start negotiations, during which he was to learn that the Jordanian king was so eager to obtain Vampires that he did not mind if RAF pilots flew these.[7]

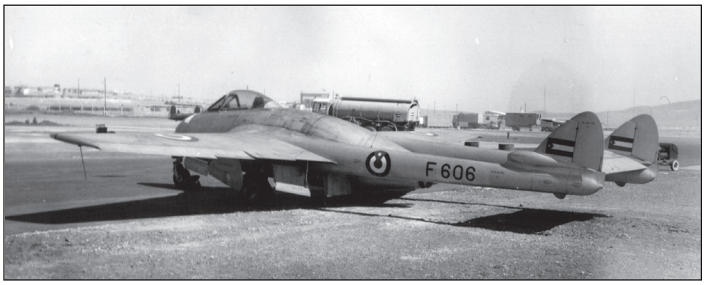
On 19 July 1951, the first group of native pilots completed training and received their wings from King Abdullah in person. Only a day later, however, Abdullah was shot while visiting the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem for Friday prayers. Talal I Bin Abdullah, a graduate of the British Army's Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1929, succeeded his father on the Jordanian throne. Talal's reign was very short: on 11 August 1952, the Jordanian Parliament sorrowfully forced him to abdicate, supposedly for health reasons. Talal's successor, Prince Hussein, was an adolescent and thus could only ascend the throne on 2 May 1953. Barely a month later, Wing Commander Jock Dalgleish (RAF) was posted as new C-in-C ALAF. Like Fisher before him, Dalgleish had great influence over the young King Hussein of Jordan, and had therefore been told to do all he could to discourage him from taking up flying. However, Hussein persisted: he purchased several ex-RAF Austers and a Dove, followed by two ex-RAF Vampire T.Mk 11 two-seat conversion trainers, which became the first jets of the ALAF, in July 1955. With Dalgleish's supervision, the king successively soloed on an Auster, a Dove and then a Vampie. Indeed, although Hussein subsequently demanded Dalgleish's secondment to Jordan to be extended, Glubb Pasha – then in command of the Arab Legion (as the Jordanian Army was named until 1956) – demurred. Dalgleish returned to the



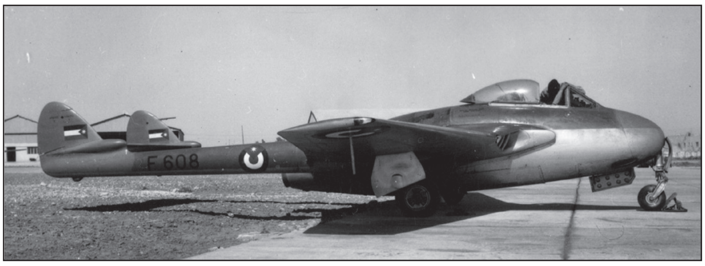
One of 10 ex-RAF North American Harvard T.Mk 2Bs donated to Jordan in 1955. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)



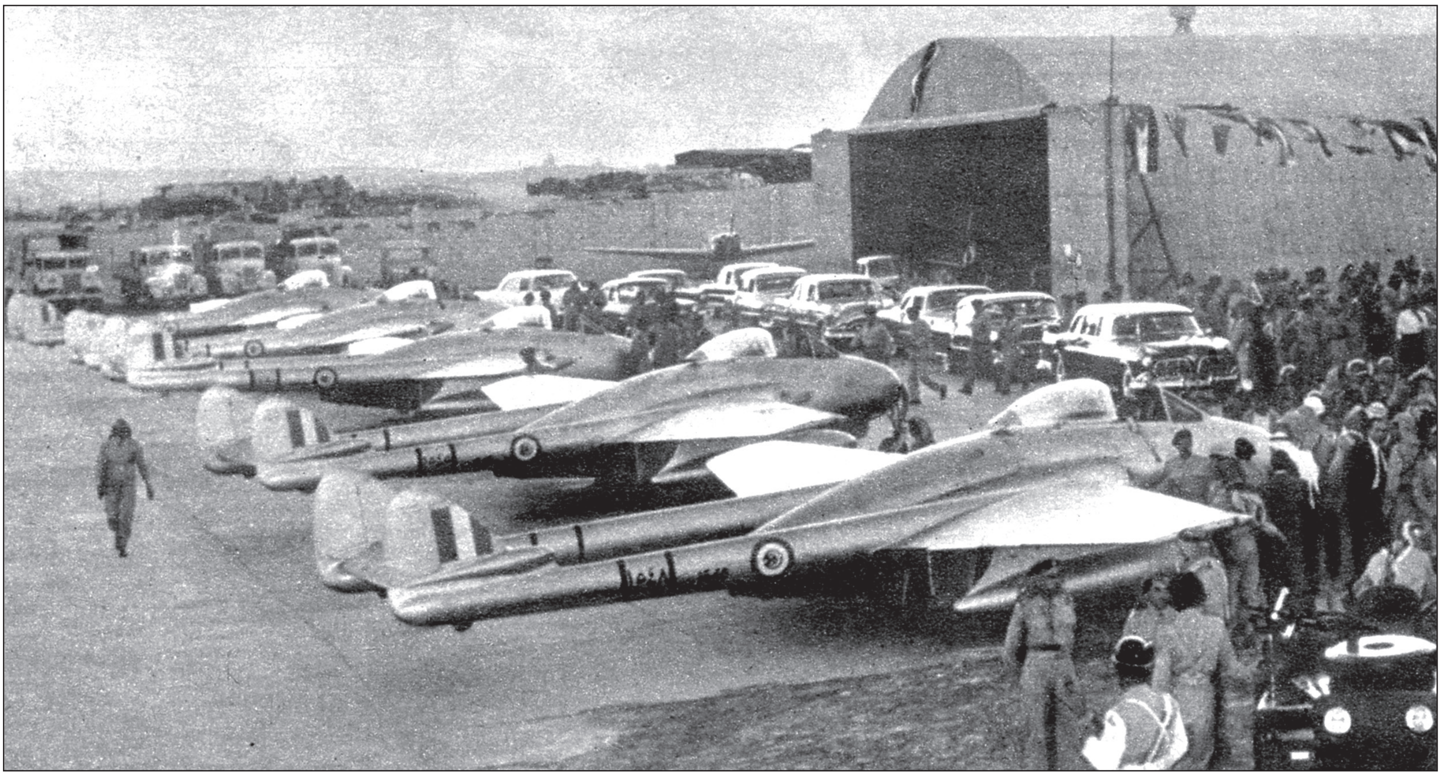
In April 1956, Egypt donated three Gomhouria elementary trainers to Jordan. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)



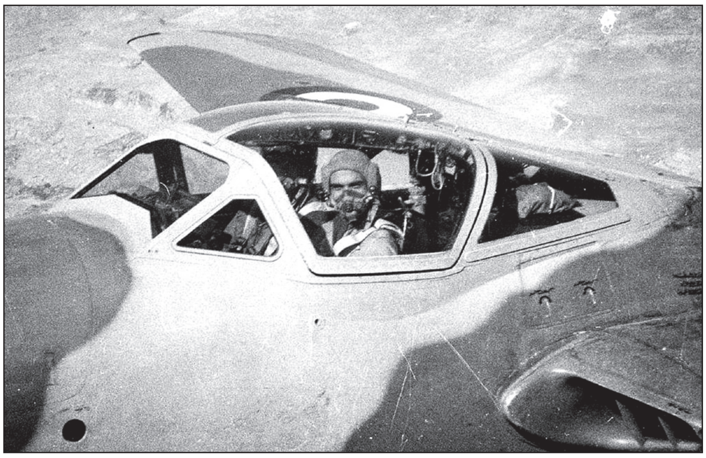
Also originating from Egypt was this Vampire FB.Mk 52, operated by No. 1 Squadron until the type was withdrawn from service in 1962. Notable are traces of the removal of traditional Egyptian identification stripes on the booms, and the application of the fin flash on the insides of the fin. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)



As well as ex-Egyptian Vampires, the RJAF operated nine ex-RAF Vampire FB.Mk 9s in the late 1950s. The aircraft appear to have been painted in dark sea grey and dark green on the upper surfaces and sides, but had lower surfaces left without camouflage colours. (John Fricker Collection, via Simon Watson)



A rare photograph taken at Amman International Airport on 25 October 1956 of five Vampire FB.Mk 52s of the Egyptian Air Force shortly after their donation to Jordan which took place before the Suez Crisis. The aircraft in the foreground has the serial number 1548, the second in the row 1545, while serial numbers of the other three examples remain unknown. (Nour Bardai Collection)



Prince Hussein, future king of Jordan, during a training flight on one of two Vampire T.Mk 11 two-seat conversion trainers (serial number 209) in the mid-1950s. Note the maintenance of stencilling in Arabic. (RJAF)

UK in January 1956 and was replaced by the first Jordanian C-in-C ALAF, Major Ibrahim Othman.

Meanwhile, on 25 September 1955, the British decided to donate 10 ex-RAF Vampire FB.Mk 9s to Jordan, and these began arriving two months later, with the last following by February 1956. Furthermore, Egypt donated the first three Helwan Gomhouria basic trainers to Jordan on 6 April 1956, and five Vampire FB.Mk 52s on 25 October of the same year.

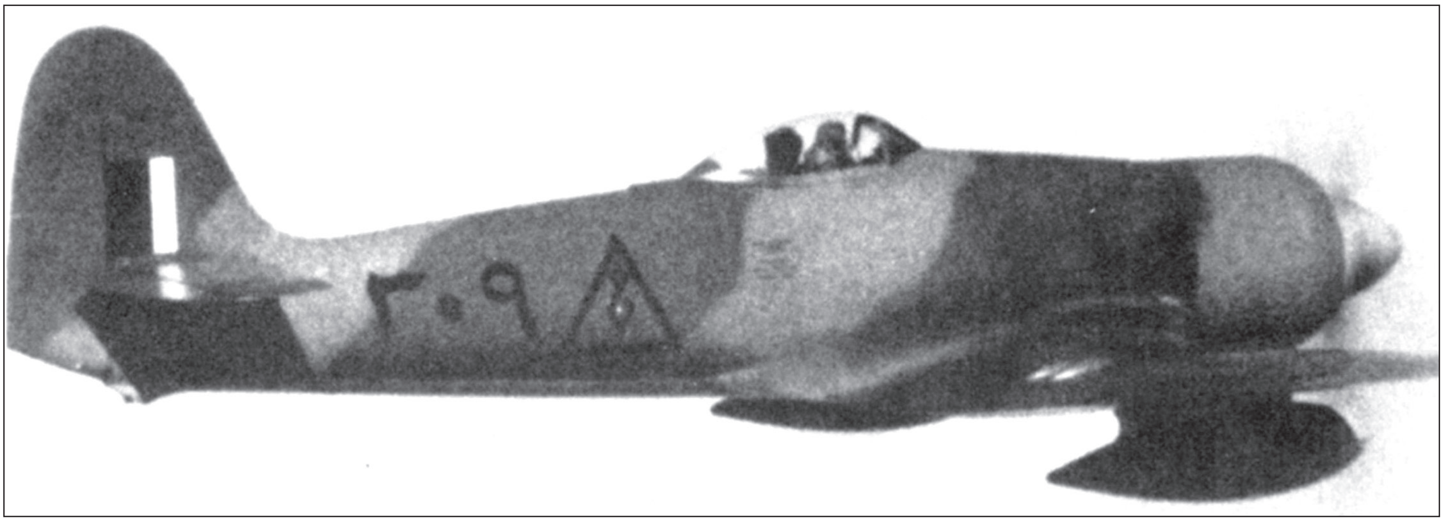
When the ALAF was officially renamed as the Royal Jordanian Air Force on 25 September 1956, and Major Ibrahim Othman became the first Jordanian C-in-C RJAF, his force consisted of No. 1 Squadron equipped with Vampires, No. 2 Squadron that operated transport types and No. 6 Squadron that acted as an operational conversion unit (OCU) for all available aircraft types.[8] Othman was supervised by Wing Commander Dobree-Bell (RAF), who acted as Air Adviser to Jordan, and worked in cooperation with a number of officers and NCOS who were loaned to the ALAF to provide assistance in training. The RJAF thus not only adopted British-made aircraft, but closely followed RAF methods and operations practices.[9]

2

CRISIS OF 1958

The aggression of France, Great Britain and Israel against Egypt, which resulted in the Suez War of 1956, had a number of important repercussions for the entire Middle East. Above all, in the eyes of the Arab public, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser won a major victory over former colonial powers – the UK and France –virtually ending their domination of the region. A public image of Nasser was created that presented him as someone with all the personal attributes required for an Arab leader: qualities that the other Arab leaders lacked.

Under pressure from pan-Arabists, King Hussein abrogated the Treaty of Friendship with London and all British forces were withdrawn from Jordan, resulting in a considerable weakening of the previous close ties between the RAF and the RJAF. On the contrary, Jordanians attempted to establish close ties with Egypt and Syria, and participated in an attempt to raise a sort of a pan-Arab fighter squadron, manned by Algerian, Egyptian, Jordanian, Saudi Arabian and Syrian pilots. Five RJAF pilots were sent for this purpose to the Syrian Arab Air Force (SyAAF) Academy in Aleppo – Nasri Jumean, Firas Ajlouni, Marwan Zakkaria, Sharif Ghazi Sa'adeddin and Hussien Oweideh – where they trained together with eight Syrians (including the future President of Syria, Hafez al-Assad), four Egyptians and an Algerian. Additionally, five Jordanian cadets were sent to Egypt for basic pilot training.[10]



Iraqi Fury FB.Mk 11 serial number 309 on patrol over northern Iraq in the late 1950s. The type was operated by No. 1 and No. 7 Squadrons from Mosul and Kirkuk, respectively. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

This effort came to a sudden end. On 10 April 1957, pan-Arabist General Ali Abu Nowar – appointed as Chief of Staff of the Jordanian Army only a few weeks before – launched a coup attempt against King Hussein. The attempt failed, though subsequent relations between Jordan and Syria soured. As a result, all the RJAF pilots were recalled from Syria, returning home in June and July of that year. Within weeks, Amman began signalling to London a willingness to re-establish good relations with the British.

On 1 February 1958, the Syrians voluntarily joined Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (UAR). The Syrian decision increased the pressure upon the Iraqi and Jordanian governments: feeling unable to resist in any other fashion, the kingdoms of Iraq and Jordan proclaimed their merger into the Arab Federation, with King Faisal II of Iraq as Chief of State, on 14 February 1958. The new Arab Federation was to have one flag and one federal government, with two regional administrations, and a united military, including an air force. Severely disappointed, pan-Arabists in both countries continued plotting military coups.

Another of the repercussions of the Suez War was a significant engagement of the United States in the Middle East. In March 1957, the administration of US President Dwight D. Eisenhower announced what became known as the 'Eisenhower Doctrine', according to which the United States would offer aid and military support to all foreign allies if they were threatened by the Soviets. Arab governments were, in general, not the least interested in becoming involved in the Cold War: if any similarities between their interests and those of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR, or Soviet Union) existed, it was by coincidence rather than design. However, by 1958, Egypt had established commercial and political ties to the USSR and began to look to the Soviet Union as a superpower whose influence would balance the pro-Israeli behaviour of Western superpowers.

SABRES OR HUNTERS?

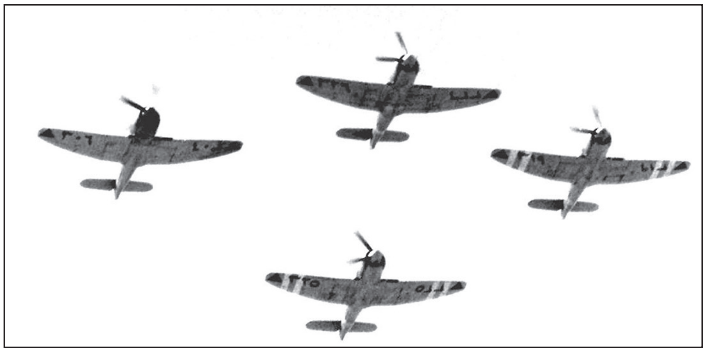
As soon as the UAR came into being, the US administration signalled to Baghdad its preparedness to provide military aid to Iraq: the Americans offered to equip three RIrAF squadrons with 36 North American F-86F Sabre and F-86D Sabre Dog interceptors, and Republic F-84G Thunderjet fighter-bombers, provided free of charge. British reports about related talks cited 'strong US pressure to expand the Iraqi air force in a rush', but also noted that the C-in-C RIrAF, Major General Abadi, was 'still favouring keeping the RIrAF equipped with British types'. According to British reports, Abadi and the Iraqi government approached their counterparts in London with requests for delivery of additional Hunters and English Electric Canberra bombers. The Iraqis were intending to establish their second squadron of Hunters in 1958, followed by a third unit in 1959, and two bomber squadrons, the first of which would be equipped with 12 Canberras by the end of 1958.[11]

The request for additional Hunters was received positively by London, and the British signalled their readiness to provide either 36 ex-RAF Hunter F.Mk 4s (32 of these then in service with No. 41 Air Group, and still equipped with Mk 5 gunsights) for free, or a mix of 24 F.Mk 4s on short notice for free and 12 F.Mk 6s in 1959, at a price of £130,000 each. Various contemporary assessments stipulated a possible delivery of 12 Hunters by the end of May 1958, 12 by the end of July and the last 12 not later than the end of October. Furthermore, the conversion of necessary crews could be undertaken locally, particularly once the new, 2,500m-long runway – the future Taqqaddum Air Base – was constructed on a plateau near Habbaniyah. Although plenty of talks took place during the subsequent weeks and months, this deal was never realised.[12]

However, the British were less sympathetic with the idea of providing Canberra bombers to Iraq. Misinterpreting the intentions of the government in Baghdad, they assumed that it was the Iraqis who originally approached the Americans with requests for 36 Sabres, and were now attempting to play Washington against London. They explained to the Iraqis that English Electric was already overburdened producing a large number of Canberras ordered by India, and that the only variant available at the time – the B.Mk 2 – was 'not suitable for an air-to-ground role'. Furthermore, only five Iraqi crews could have been trained by the end of the year, and even these would have to be drawn from those Iraqi pilots then undergoing conversion courses for Hunters in the UK. The British also maintained that the US would probably not be ready to provide the required financial support for such a purchase, and noted that political repercussions were possible following the first sale of British-made bombers to any country in the Middle East.[13] Simultaneously, during the meeting with members of the US Military Survey Team for Iraq in the UK, in February 1958, the British pressed home their standpoint that there was a 'special relationship' between the UK and Iraq. They pointed out the extent of RAF influence and assistance to the RIrAF, and that the

A twin column of British-made Churchill tanks on parade during the mid-1950s. Several British-made Centurion tanks can also be seen in the background. In common with the RIrAF, during the 1950s, the Iraqi Army was predominantly equipped with weapons of US and British origin. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

The RIrAF frequently staged air power demonstrations for foreign dignitaries, including the visit by King Saud Ibn Saud to Iraq in 1956. The King is shown monitoring a simulated air-to-ground attack by an RIrAF Vampire. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



Four RIrAF Furies overfly a parade staged by Iraqi armed forces for King Saud, in the course of which US-made M24 Chafee and British-made Churchill and Centurion tanks also put on a display. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

provision by the US of a large number of any kind of combat aircraft – including Sabres – could be 'disastrous'.[14]

Such conclusions were not without reason, considering the fact that talks between the Americans and British revealed that the RIrAF currently even lacked airfields from which it could properly operate Hunters. Sure enough, No. 6 Squadron was based at Habbaniyah, where the 2,000m runway was in the process of being extended to 2,500m, and Mosul, where the runway length was also about 2,000m. However, the minimum operational requirements for the Hunter under 'hot and high' climatic conditions stipulated a runway length of 3,000m. Other airfields then existing in Iraq, including Wahda (the former RAF Shoibiyah) and Kirkuk, had even shorter runways, while the old H-3 airfield, built by the British near a pumping station on the oil pipeline connecting Haifa with central Iraq back in the 1930s, was still a very rudimentary installation without any capability to support fighter jets.[15]

On top of this, the British cited reports from the RAF Attaché in Baghdad, which indicated that the RIrAF was simply too small to acquire 36 new jet fighters within such a short period of time. Specifically, the report in question, issued on 1 February 1958, described the strength of the Royal Iraqi Air Force as follows:

- Habbaniyah: 15 Hunter F.Mk 6s, 20 Venoms (14 operational), eight Vampire FB.Mk 52s (six operational) and six Vampire T.Mk 11s.
- Wahda: 40 Sea Furies (15 operational).
- Rashid: six Stinson L-5 Sentinels (four operational), 11 Austers (six operational), one Piper PA-18A Cub, four Bristol Freighters (three operational), two Herons (one operational), five Doves (four operational) and two Westland S-51 helicopters (one operational).

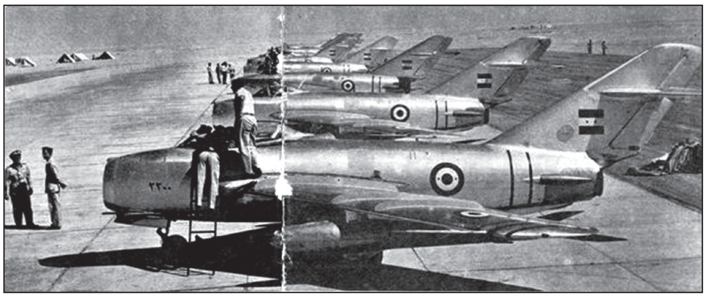
The same report concluded that estimated serviceability was at 60 percent, but with poor spares backing, and that the RIrAF apparently had only 65 pilots, of whom 33 had trained on jets (10 had completed the Hunter OCU course and 15 were in the process of conversion at Chivenor). Another report indicated that 40 additional Iraqi pilots were expected to arrive in the UK in May 1958.[16]

Despite understanding British objections, the Americans eventually proceeded with their plan and decided to deliver 36 Sabres. After 15 RIrAF pilots underwent conversion course in the US, the first five aircraft were delivered to Habbaniyah in early July 1958 – flown by US pilots – and were scheduled to enter service with No. 4 Squadron, a unit then still flying Furies and under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Shams Idlin.

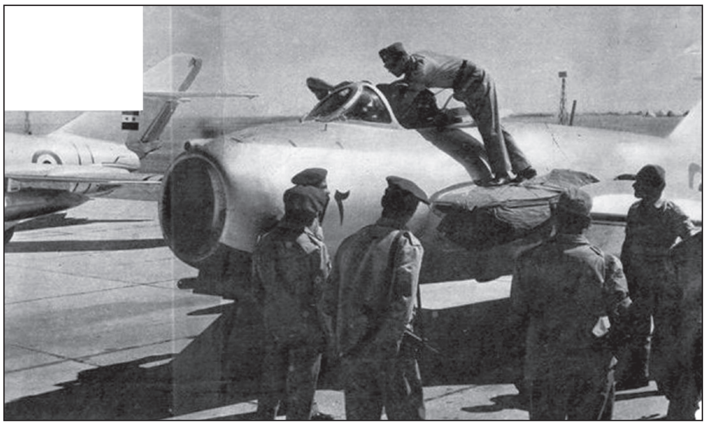
14 TAMMUZ REVOLUTION: FIRST TASTE OF COMBAT

Inspired by the creation of the UAR, a group of pan-Arabist 'Free Officers' exploited the fact that Premier as-Said – partially due to the requirements for unification of the Iraqi and Jordanian armed forces, but also because of increasing pressure from Cairo and Damascus – ordered the deployment of two Iraqi Army brigades, the 19th and 20th, through Baghdad to Jordan. On the morning of 14 July 1958, the troops of these two brigades, led by Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qasim and his aide, Colonel Abd as-Salam Arif, seized the radio station in Baghdad. In a public speech, as-Salam Arif announced a revolution, declared the downfall of the monarchy and proclaimed a republic. Immediately afterwards, his soldiers occupied the al-Rahab Palace and Prime Minister Nuri as-Said's residence in the face of no resistance from the Royal Guard. The entire royal family, including King Faisal II and Crown Prince Abdul Illah, the former Prime Minister of Jordan, as well as the entire royal government, were arrested and subsequently executed.[17] The coup resulted in public violence that spread through the streets of Baghdad during the hours that followed, culminating in the destruction of the British Embassy as well as the murder of several Jordanian and US citizens. In fact, unrest only died down after Qasim arrived in Baghdad to impose a curfew, but not before the mutilated body of Abdul Illah had been hung outside the Ministry of Defence. The last C-in-C RIrAF, Major General Abadi, was forced into an early retirement (to be appointed as an ambassador with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry subsequently), while during the afternoon of 14 July, Hunters of No. 6 Squadron became the first ever to fire their weapons in anger.

In reaction to the coup in Baghdad, pro-Royalist elements of the 1st Iraqi Infantry Division, led by the veteran General Omar Ali and based in Basrah, advanced on Baghdad. One of several Hunters patrolling the airspace around Baghdad following the coup detected this column as it was approaching Hillah, some 100km (62 miles) south of the Iraqi capital. The pilot attacked with cannon fire, as a consequence of which the disheartened Royalists stopped their advance and retreated. The Republican coup had been a clear victory, which subsequently became known in Iraq as the '14 Tammuz Revolution'. It is still recalled as the day the nation rid itself of British influence.



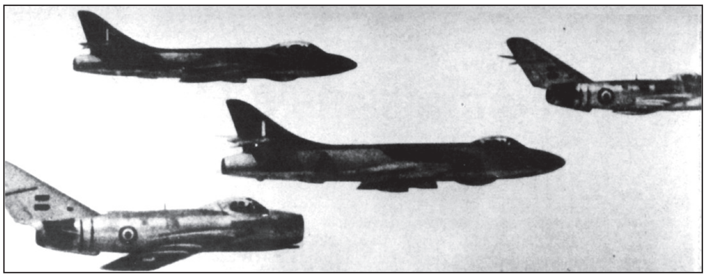
Immediately after the 14 Tammuz Revolution, the United Arab Republic Air Force deployed a squadron of MiG-17s to Iraq, in order to bolster protection of the new government in Baghdad against a possible British intervention. A row of seven MiG-17Fs (the aircraft in the foreground is wearing serial number 2200) are shown at Habbaniyah AB. (Nour Bardai Collection):



Iraqi ground personnel (with berets) and Egyptians gathering around two UARAF MiG-17Fs at Habbaniyah AB in late July 1958. The example in the foreground was apparently an ex-Syrian MiG, wearing the serial number 72, but – unlike the ex-Egyptian example in the background – none have the standard 'identification' stripes around the rear fuselage and wingtips. (Nour Bardai Collection)

Early on 15 July, Qasim established a Revolutionary Council

Table 1: IrAF, July 1958[19]			
Unit	**Base**	**Equipment**	**Remarks**
Flying Units			
No. 1 Squadron	Mosul	Fury FB.Mk 1	In process of conversion to Venom FB.Mk 1; last RIrAF CO Lieutenant Colonel Abdallah Naji al-Jasin; first IrAF CO Major Qasim Mohammad el-Azawi
No. 2 Squadron	Rashid	Anson and Dragonfly	Light transport squadron equipped with remaining Ansons and a few Dragonfly helicopters
No. 3 Squadron	Rashid	Dove, Heron Srs.Mk 2, Bristol Freighter C.Mk 31M	Heavy transport and VIP transport unit (Herons were operated by the former Royal Flight)
No. 4 Squadron		Fury FB.Mk 1	Unit expecting conversion to F-86F Sabre; CO Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Rajap A'rem
No. 5 Squadron	Rashid	Venom FB.Mk 50	Last RIrAF CO Lieutenant Colonel Mahmmoud Aziz; first IrAF CO Major Nimma Abdullah ad-Dulaymi
No. 6 Squadron	Habbaniyah	Hunter F.Mk 6	Premier IrAF fighter-bomber unit; last RIrAF CO Squadron Leader Arif Abd ar-Razzaq; first IRAF CO Major Mufid Sayd
No. 7 Squadron	Kirkuk	Fury FB.Mk 1	CO Lieutenant Colonel Abd el-Saheb Mohammad
Flying College	Rashid	Chipmunk T.Mk 20, Provost T.Mk 53,	

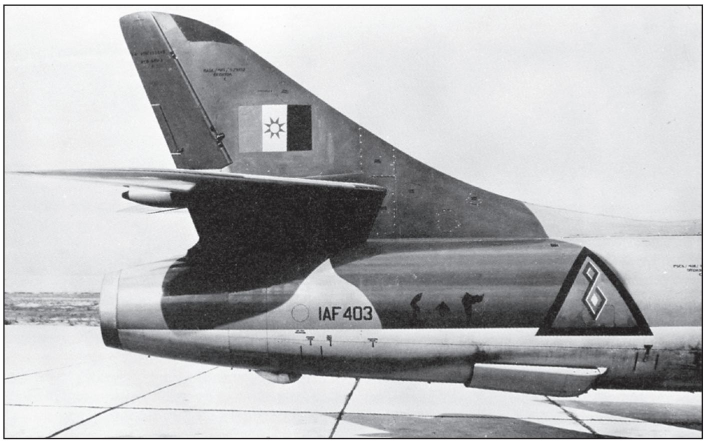


A pair of Iraqi Hunter F.Mk 6s accompanied by a pair of UARAF MiG-17Fs during one of the joint exercises undertaken immediately after the 14 Tammuz Revolution. Note that both Hunters were still wearing old 'royal' national markings, which were replaced only days later. (David Nicolle Collection)

comprising members of Iraq's three main ethnic groups, while appointing himself Prime Minister and Minister of Defence. As-Salam Arif became the Minister of Interior and Deputy C-in-C of the Iraqi military. Immediately afterwards, Brigadier General Jalal Jawad al-Awqati was appointed as C-in-C of the Air Force. The service also lost the prefix 'Royal' and started to use Arab military ranks.[18]

NEW ALLIANCES AND NEW ENEMIES

With Brigadier General Abd al-Karim Qasim securely in control of the country, al-Awqati – renowned as a staunch communist (a fact tolerated in the pluralist and generally pan-Arabist Iraqi society which then existed) – had ordered all British and US personnel present in the country to be arrested (only to release them a few months later) and began encouraging the government to approach Moscow with demands for arms deliveries. The IrAF shelved plans to re-equip No. 4 Squadron and stored the five F-86s in a hangar at Rashid AB, where they remained for some time before being returned to the US.[20] Emboldened by the realisation of a strong communist influence in post-revolutionary Iraq, the Soviets were swift to respond. The first contracts for Mikoyan i Gurevich MiG-15s and MiG-17s, Ilyushin Il-28 bombers, Antonov An-12 transports, Yakovlev Yak-18 trainers and assorted equipment were signed within weeks of the 14 Tammuz Revolution, and deliveries began during the autumn of 1958. At least initially, the arrival of Soviet aircraft and 120 Soviet advisers changed little – if anything – within the IrAF. Except for introducing Arab military ranks, the air force's organisation, unit structure, training and tactics, uniforms and even traditions remained very similar to those of the RAF. Furthermore, the third group of Iraqi pilots completed their Hunter conversion course in the UK between August and November 1958. Among them was Lieutenant Munthir al-Windawi, who was to play a dominant role in a number of subsequent developments.[21]

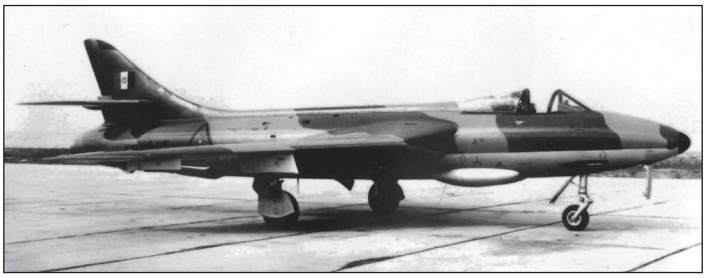


A view of the fin of IrAF Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 403, showing details of national markings, serial numbers and maintenance stencils in use during the period 1958 1963. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

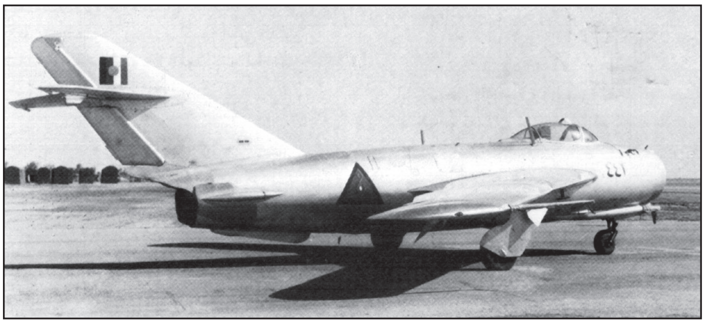
Major changes were, however, introduced within the IrAF's command structure. For example, Major ar-Razzaq, having been imprisoned immediately after the coup, was freed, advanced in rank and in March 1959 appointed as CO of Habbaniyah, the second most important air base in the country. In ar-Razzaq's place, Major Dulaymi took over as CO No. 6 Squadron, with Hamid Shab'an and Mummtazz as-Sadoon as his deputies. Following practices introduced by ar-Razzaq, Dulaymi continued training the pilots of No. 6 Squadron intensively, particularly for air-to-ground operations. During one such exercise, a Hunter flown by Flight Lieutenant Mufeed Saed crashed on 3 October 1958 due to a catastrophic loss of hydraulic pressure, killing the pilot.[22] Sadly, next to nothing is known about the cooperation between the IrAF and a squadron of United Arab Republic Air Force (UARAF, official designation of the Egyptian Air Force from 1958 until 1972) MiG-17s deployed in Iraq during the same year. Arriving at Habbaniyah in late February 1958, this unit remained in Iraq for four months, and was entrusted with the primary task of providing protection for Qasim's government.

In January 1959, the IrAF received its first MiG-17Fs from the USSR. They became operational with No. 5 Squadron (then under the temporary command of Major Dulaymi), replacing Vampires that were subsequently handed over to the Flying School at Rashid. The unit was under Dulaymi's temporary command until another ex-Hunter pilot, Major Khaled Sarah, took over on 13 February 1959.

Unfortunately, Iraqi Hunters and MiG-17s saw further action barely a month later. After Qasim proved reluctant to unite Iraq with the UAR and distanced himself from the pan-Arabist as-Salam Arif, he gradually sided with Iraqi communits and failed to hold free elections. Many Iraqis found it increasingly difficult to remain loyal, and new coups were soon plotted by different cliques within



Following the 14 Tammuz Revolution, the IrAF introduced new national markings, consisting of (from left to right) fields in green, white and black, with a stylised sun in the centre. (Albert Grandolini Collection):



One of the first MiG-17Fs (serial number 441) delivered to Iraq, starting in January 1959. Interestingly, while entering service with the IrAF after Hunters did so, they were eventually withdrawn from use in 1974 – nearly ten years before the IrAF ceased flying Hunters. (Ahmad Sadik Collection):

the military.

On 8 March 1959, the 5th Infantry Brigade in Mosul mutinied. Although launched along similar lines as the 14 Tammuz Revolution, this action was nowhere near as successful: on the early morning of the next day, four MiG-17s from No. 5 Squadron hit the makeshift radio station positioned in the Headquarters (HQ) of the 5th Brigade, destroying it in the process.[23] The brief civil war that now broke out in Mosul was easily put down by force in a matter of days. Nevertheless, resentment remained and a number of officers within the IrAF, including pan-Arabist ar-Razzaq, were subsequently arrested and imprisoned, while others began plotting coups against Qasim. Loss of experienced officers and their know-how resulted in several training accidents. With al-Awqati surrounding himself with pro-communist officers and requesting deliveries of MiG-19s from Moscow, the Iraqi Hunter-fleet – meanwhile down to 12 aircraft – appeared to be a candidate for an early retirement.

BRITISH INTERVENTION IN JORDAN

Jordan felt the impact of the coup in Iraq acutely, and not only because the two royal families were related. The revolt in Iraq spread to Lebanon and threatened to spread into Jordan: indeed, on the same day that the coup occurred in Baghdad, a similar attempt was thwarted in Amman. Correspondingly, on 16 July 1958, King Hussein of Jordan requested help from London. The British did not let the king wait for very long.

At dawn on 17 July, Handley Page Hastings transports of No. 70 Squadron, RAF, flew 200 troops of 2 Battalion, 16 Para Brigade, to Amman. This small force was initially very isolated, particularly as the Israelis would not permit any British aircraft to use their airspace, and their interceptors buzzed British transport aircraft several times. Under pressure from Washington, however, the situation changed, particularly once the fighters from aircraft carriers USS Saratoga (CV-60) and USS Essex (CV-9) began escorting British transport over Israel to Jordan. They also flew CAPs (combat air patrols) inside Israeli and Jordanian airspace. Rey Kolakowski, then the CO of VF-62 'Boomerangs' – a US Navy squadron that flew North American FJ-3M Furies from USS Essex – recalled a power demonstration staged by the US Navy over Israel:

> On the second or third day on station [off the coast of Lebanon] I was directed to fly my entire squadron down the middle of the Dead Sea, from north to south, at low altitude. I think we flew at 500ft.

Within the next two days, the British deployed six Hunters from No. 208 Squadron – commanded by Wing Commander Dalgleish – and 2,200 additional paratroopers to Amman, together with some light artillery, while other reinforcements began concentrating on Cyprus. US forces did not support this operation, even though US Navy carriers remained active in the eastern Mediterranean because of the Lebanon crisis, as Kolakowski described:

> The only aircraft that I recall seeing were British Hunters out of Cyprus. We would frequently get into friendly dogfights with them. When we stopped seeing them for a few days, I made a low pass over their airfield and dropped a note in effect saying, 'We have missed you up here. Surely, the mighty Hunter isn't afraid of the Fury!' The next morning they were in the sky again.

With British paras and RAF Hunters at his side, King Hussein of Jordan had received guarantees of loyalty from all the influential Bedouin tribes by 11 August 1958. The British troops were then free to leave. As they had during their deployment to Jordan, the Israelis disturbed the subsequent withdrawal of British troops. Indeed, their evacuation from Amman, in October 1958, resulted in a particularly tense situation, since US Navy fighters were no longer around to help. In fact, the Israelis denied RAF transports overflight rights, but, with help from UN General Odd Bull, who negotiated with the then Commander-in-Chief of the UARAF Northern Command (as the Syrian Arab Air Force was designated during the times of the UAR), General Wadiyah Mak'abri, an alternative transit route via Syria and Lebanon was agreed. The only condition that Moukabri set was that the British transports must fly in groups, so that they were easier to control. The British then explained that their transport pilots were not trained in formation flying, so the UN deployed its personnel in control towers at Amman, Beirut and Nicosia. General Bull was himself present in the control tower at Damascus al-Mezza, observing Syrian controllers as they guided British pilots along the correct route. In total, 86 flights by RAF aircraft and those of several allied nations were required to fly the British out of Jordan. Six RAF fighters and three transport aircraft were also evacuated via Syria.

A Hunter F.Mk 6 of No. 208 Squadron taxiing at RAF Akrotiri prior to leaving for Amman to provide cover for 16 Para Brigade. It was during this deployment that Wing Commander Dalgleish returned to Jordan. Early on in the intervention, Israel refused permission for overflights, leaving the initial British contingent isolated and thus vulnerable. (C. Shepherdson)

CHASED KING

With his kingdom safely under control, King Hussein of Jordan decided to get some rest. On 14 November, together with Dalgleish, the Jordanian monarch flew his twin-engined de Havilland Dove from Amman for a three-week vacation in Europe. As the plane crossed the border to 'Eastern Province' – as Syria was named during the times of the UAR – the flight control in Damascus called the king's plane, issuing a warning that he had no overflight clearance, and demanding the identity of the aircraft, its crew and passengers. Defying a clear and official order to land in Damascus, the king turned the controls over to Dalgleish and ordered him to fly them back to Amman. Before the Dove could reach the Jordanian border, two UARAF MiG-17Fs appeared, forcing Dalgleish to enter a series of very tight turns, and finally descend to critically low levels in order to escape. Whether the MiGs ever saw the royal Hashemite standard painted on Dove's stabiliser remains unknown: despite subsequent Jordanian accusations of an 'attack', and although making five passes by the Dove, the MiGs never opened fire. Dalgleish and King Hussein landed their plane safely back in Amman.

The incident caused an eruption of anti-Syrian protests in Jordan, and the Jordanian Premier Samir Rifai informed the UN representative in Amman that his government intended to protest about Syrian behaviour to the UN Security Council, and was demanding an immediate meeting of the Arab League Council. Eventually, UAR officials provided clear evidence that King Hussein's Dove had been crossing the Eastern Province without

ROYAL JORDANIAN AIR FORCE
D-101

A nice study of one of five de Havilland Doves operated by the RJAF in the late 1950s and early 1960s. One of these was carrying King Hussein when intercepted by two UARAF MiG-17s while underway over Syria (or 'Eastern Province', as Syria was officially named during the times of the UAE). (John Fricker Collection via Simon Watson)

proper clearance and had been intercepted by UARAF MiGs in a routine and perfectly legal manner. True enough, the authorities at the Amman International Airport relayed the king's flight plan to Beirut via Syria – as required by the international aviation regulations – but nobody bothered to obtain the overflight clearance through diplomatic channels required before the plane could cross a foreign frontier. Instead, the Jordanians assumed that the flight had been cleared through the UN representative in Amman, who denied this promptly. Therefore, the UAR military authorities received no information about the intentions of what in their eyes was just another unidentified aircraft violating their borders.

A subsequent Jordanian investigation into this affair concluded that the C-in-C RJAF, Lieutenant Colonel Ibrahim Othman, indeed ordered 'someone' to obtain diplomatic clearance from Syria. But, still suffering occasional blackouts from head injuries suffered when he was caught and badly mauled by the Baghdad mob during the rebellion in Iraq, Othman failed to follow it up. An embarrassing silence in Amman was one result: a sort of cold war between the governments of Jordan and Syria that is de-facto going on until today.[24]

HUNTERS FOR JORDAN

The interception of King Hussein's Dove occurred midway through the Jordanian acquisition of Hunters. The RJAF first expressed an intention to acquire Hunters in 1956, when Othman presented a plan for a speedy expansion of his force to three squadrons, including two equipped with swept-wing fighters, and requested free training for 40 pilots in the UK. When King Hussein abrogated the Treaty of Friendship, such plans were examined by London – which had originally intended to provide 16 Supermarine Swift fighters to Jordan – and abandoned. In December 1957, Amman entered negotiations with London for the acquisition of '16 to 20' ex-RAF Hunter F.Mk 6s, but this plan quickly foundered due to a lack of funds.[25] Correspondingly, as of 1 February 1958, the RAF Attaché in Amman reported the status of the RJAF as follows:

- 1 Fighter Squadron operating 14 Vampire F.Mk 9 and FB.Mk 52s, of which six were estimated as operational.
- 1 Reconnaissance Squadron operating six Austers, of which three were estimated operational.
- 1 Transport Squadron operating two Dragon Rapides (one operational), four Doves (two operational) and one Vickers Viking.
- 1 Training Squadron operating three Harvards, five Chipmunks and two Vampire T.Mk 11s.

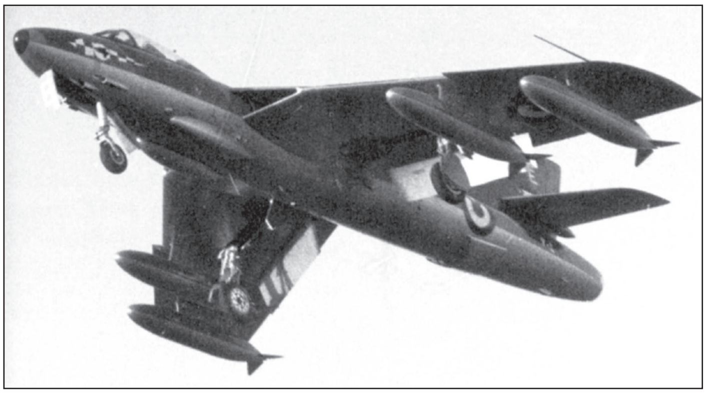
The same report concluded with observations that aircraft serviceability rates had dropped considerably since the withdrawal of the RAF mission; that there were 15 pilots, of whom only six could be regarded as jet qualified; that five additional pilots had recently gone solo on Vampires and nine on Chipmunks; and that Amman and Mafraq air bases were the only 'all-weather' airfields in the country.

A new round of negotiations followed through March and April 1958, by when Amman secured funding from the US, and – with the help of a British agreement to provide training on the 'normal basis of charging on extra-cost terms' – further talks on acquisition of jet fighters and the training of RJAF pilots in the UK resulted in an order for 12 Hunters, flying training courses for 10 men, as well as training to wing standard of 12 other Jordanian pilots. Additionally, Major Othman underwent a course at the RAF Staff College in Andover, followed by his deputy, later in 1958.[26]

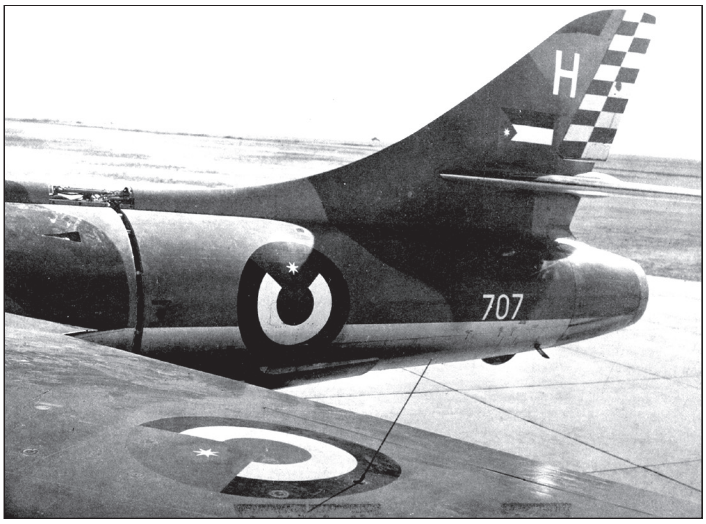
Between November and December 1958, Jordan received 11 Hunters: the aircraft flown by Lieutenant Farouq Nadim Rajab crashed during a training flight in the UK, killing its pilot, on 25 August 1958.

Together with the Hunters, a group of British instructors led by Wing Commander Bennet, RAF, arrived to support the RJAF through the process of introducing this type into service. It was their arrival that prompted a minor reorganisation of the RJAF, as one of them later recalled:

> We had a problem: what should our squadron number be? Bennett wanted Hunters to be the No. 1 Squadron RJAF, but the Vampire and the transport squadron were already No. 1 and No. 2, respectively. This meant that logically we should have been No. 3 Squadron. Bennett was not keen on being third in the pecking order, and he eventually got the RJAF commander to agree that



While Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 704/E was delivered to Jordan on 12 November 1958, here it is showng in the landing pattern at Mafraq AB in the mid-1960s, carrying four 100-gallon (455-litre) drop tanks (made of phenol-asbestos). (Albert Grandolini Collection)



The rear fuselage and fin of RJAF Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 707/H, while undergoing maintenance, showing details of national markings, serial number and code. This aircraft was written off in a crash that occurred in September 1962 due to pilot error. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

> we should become No. 1 Squadron, much to the annoyance of our British and Arab colleagues in Amman.
>
> Next we needed a squadron crest. One of the RAF chaps was a bit arty, and he came up with a black wolf's head superimposed over an Arabic figure '1' in red. An order was placed with a firm in Pakistan to produce squadron badges in wire, to be worn on our flying suits, and for a number of wall plaques from a firm in the UK for presentation to the king and high-ranking military commanders, as well as one each for ourselves.
>
> We adopted red and white as the squadron colours, and the aircraft were painted accordingly. The logo was similar to that of No. 34 Squadron, RAF, which had been deployed to Amman the previous year. Bennett wanted to go further and have the rudders and wingtips painted with red and white squares. Nobby was against this, because in the RAF the painting of control surfaces was forbidden. But, Bennett told Nobby, 'They're not RAF aircraft, so get 'em painted!'. This he did and we finished up flying an aircraft looking a bit like a Christmas card![28]

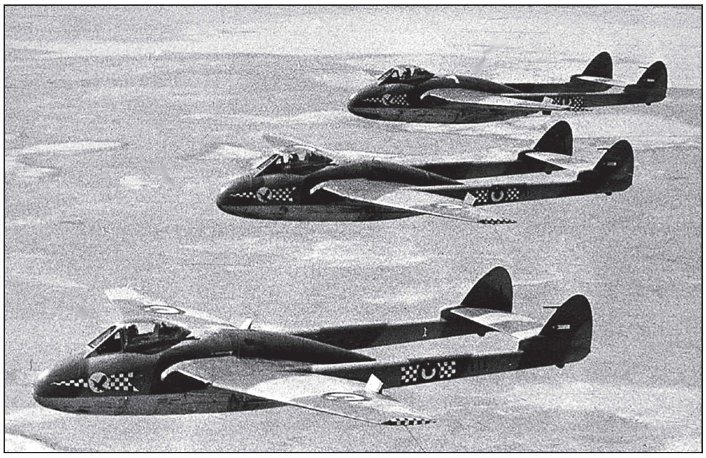
Initially, the conversion process of Jordanian pilots proceeded well and Israel reported that two RJAF Hunters flew a 'low-level reconnaissance sortie near Ramat David air base' as early as 12 August 1958 – even though at the time, Jordan did not operate any aircraft equipped for aerial reconnaissance.

TENSIONS WITH SYRIA

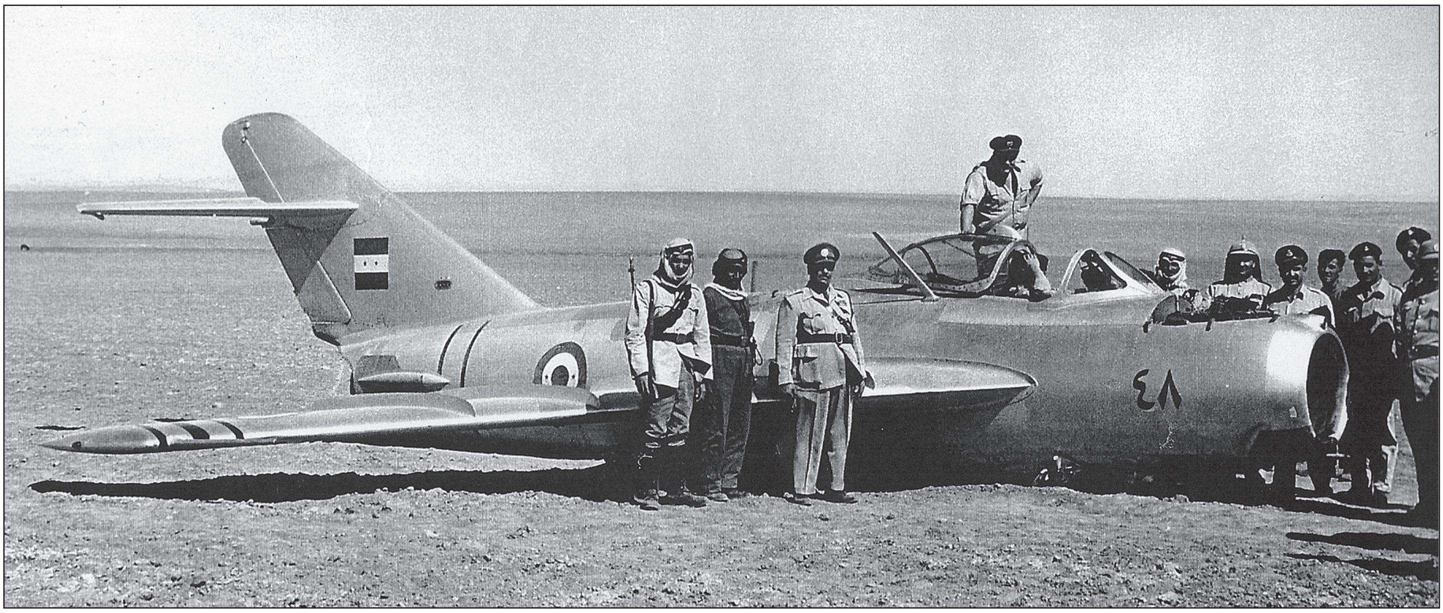
In August 1960, following the assassination of Jordanian Prime Minister Hazza'a al-Majali, King Hussein decided to launch a reprisal attack on the Eastern Province of the UAR (i.e. Syria). In the course of preparations for this operation, he entered secret negotiations with Israel in order to secure his western flank, while RJAF Hunter and Vampire pilots were redeployed to H-5 airfield and briefed for attacks on the UARAF air bases in Syria. No. 3 Squadron was scheduled to attack Almazza and Aleppo, while No. 1 Squadron was to hit Dmeyr. Jordanian pilots flew corresponding practice sorties, with training flights over similar distances and ground-attack work. The planning for this operation was largely complete by 8 September, when two brigades of the Jordanian Army were concentrated on the border, together with armour and artillery support. This operation was cancelled, under British pressure, several days later.

The UARAF was active along the border and sometimes inside Jordanian airspace too. On 27 September, a MiG-17F crash-landed in northern Jordan, followed by another that came down in the desert south-west of Amman on 4 October. The pilot of the first fighter had been injured and was taken into custody, but later returned to Syria. The pilot of the second MiG – which, according to the Records of the Hashemite Dynasty, was equipped for photo-reconnaissance – Adnan Madani (or Adnan Malki, according to other sources), said he was on a training flight from Dmeyr airfield and mistook the old Kirkuk-Haifa pipeline for its Kirkuk-Banias branch, thus becoming entirely disoriented. The pilot was taken into custody and handed over to the RJAF, where he requested political asylum. He was housed in one of No. 1 Squadron's rooms at Mafraq airfield (or at Amman IAP, according to other sources) for several months. Unfortunately, because of pressure upon his family in Syria, he committed suicide while there, as recalled by Zeid Toukan, a former RJAF Hunter pilot:

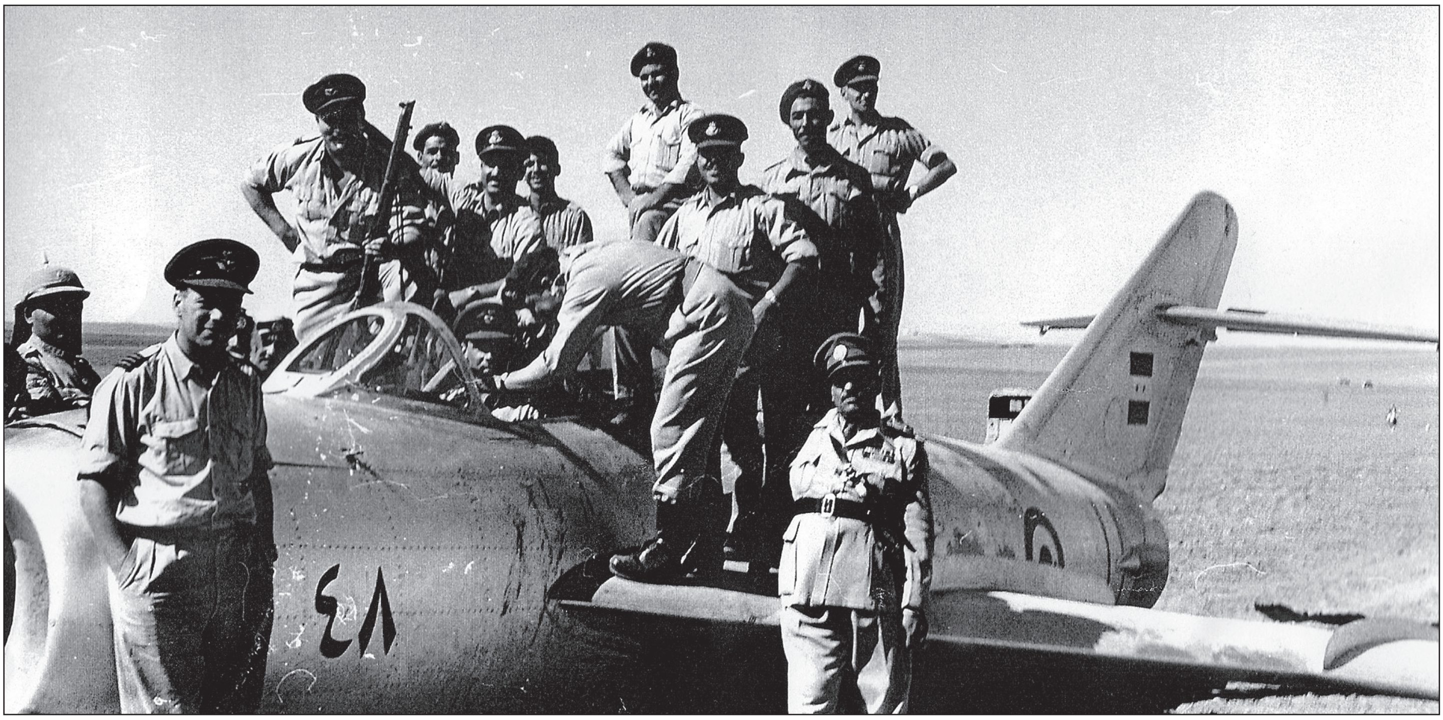
Adnan Malki crash-landed his MiG-17 south-west of Amman. He told me that he had got lost and followed heading 140 instead of 040. He was in the Officers' Mess for a couple of months. I often used to see him sitting and thinking. He died in a strange way. I was flying; the rest of the guys were in the Old Officers' Mess where there was a tennis court. Every pilot carried a gun with him. They decided to go and play tennis, so left everything in their rooms. Adnan went with them to the tennis court, then said he wanted to go back to his room to read. He went into Kamal Haddad's room, took his gun and killed himself. Everybody was thoroughly investigated



Through the last few years of their service in Jordan, Vampires were operated by No. 2 Squadron RJAF – insignia of which can be seen applied on all three of these aircraft. (RJAF)



Provided by Air Commodore John Greenhill RAF (OC RAF Training Team and Air Adviser to King Hussein) via Patricia Salti, these two phographs show the scene of what is now a forgotten drama that occurred south-west of Amman on 4 October 1960, when a UARAF MiG-17F flown by Adnan Madani made a belly-landing. The aircraft is obviously wearing full UARAF markings including identification stripes around the wingtips and the rear fuselage but also still has its original Syrian serial number, 48, applied in black on the forward fuselage. (Greenhill via Patricia Salti)



and I was asked if I knew the man before … Kamal was fired from the Air Force; he joined Alia Airlines and was killed in the [Handley Page] Dart Herald that exploded in the air on the way to Beirut … Radio Cairo later said that we killed the pilot. Actually, the Syrians had no idea what had happened, and Adnan said that he definitely did not want to defect … His MiG was recovered, put into a hangar, dismantled (both the British and the Americans had a chance to thoroughly examine it), then put together again and returned to Syria by road, something like a year later.

During this period, the RJAF experienced a spate of training accidents with its Hunters. Lieutenant Jamil Zakaria ejected safely on 1 July, but Lieutenant Ali Saleem al-Omari was less lucky: he was killed in a crash on 10 September. Realising that the process of converting young pilots from slow, piston-engined trainers to modern fighter jets was more complex than expected, the RJAF felt prompted to establish No. 4 Training Squadron, equipped with Chipmunks, and order three newly built Hunter T.Mk 66B two-seat conversion trainers – plus two Hunters equipped for reconnaissance purposes (one ex-RAF FR.Mk 10 and another ex-RAF F.Mk 6 converted to FR.Mk 10 standard) – for 'almost immediate' delivery. Most of these aircraft were in service by early 1961.

Improved training and the resulting availability of additional pilots, as well as the Iraqi order for MiG-19s, prompted the RJAF to replace the Vampires flown by No. 2 Squadron with another batch of 12 ex-RAF F.Mk 6s. Deliveries of these aircraft began in April 1962 and resulted in the retirement of Jordan's remaining Vampires: the last official flight of a single-seater took place on 17 April 1962. It was followed by the last flight of a two-seat Vampire T.Mk 11, on 14 July 1962. Subsequently, No. 3 Squadron was disbanded and its former mounts sold for scrap.[29]

FAILED DEPLOYMENT TO SAUDI ARABIA

On 26 September 1962, elements of the Yemeni military led by Brigadier General Abed Abdullah as-Sallal launched a revolution against Prince al-Badhr, forcing him to leave Sana'a, capital of the Yemeni Imamate (subsequently North Yemen, then part of the Yemen Arab Republic). Joined by the majority of tribes from the north and east of his country, al-Badhr in turn launched an insurgency. His uncle fled to Saudi Arabia, where he was welcomed by the local government that – in cooperation with the British – helped him establish a supply base, and start sending gold, weapons and supplies to various allies. Egypt immediately recognised the newly declared Republic of Yemen and Nasser, concerned over British and Saudi interventions, launched 'Operation 9000', an Egyptian military intervention in favour of as-Sallal's government. During the following weeks, the Egyptians deployed several commando battalions, one squadron each of MiG-17Fs and Il-28s, and then two army divisions to the Republic of Yemen. Thus began the North Yemen Civil War, which was to rage until 1970.

Despite the lack of public support for such an action, but alerted by the Egyptian intervention and in agreement with the Saudi government, King Hussein decided to deploy 62 troops of his army with a shipment of 12,000 Lee-Enfield rifles to the Saudi-Yemeni frontier, in support of Prince al-Badhr, in November 1962. Furthermore, he ordered the RJAF to deploy eight Hunters and a single Dove to deploy to Taif airfield in Saudi Arabia.

This decision backfired badly because of a number of pan-Arabists and pro-Nasserists within the Jordanian military. The recently appointed new C-in-C RJAF, Colonel Sahel Hamzeh, flew the Dove on 10 November – but not to Taif: he continued all the way to Cairo IAP in Egypt instead. Tahsin Fuad Hussein Saima and Harib Arif Sandoukah followed in similar fashion while flying two Hunters. The excitement in Egypt had not yet settled when, on the next day, two other pilots –Major Sahal Hamzeh and (rank unknown) ash-Shra' – defected in their Hunters (serial numbers 804 and 810), flying these straight from Amman to Egypt. The following account of this affair was provided by one of the involved pilots on condition of anonymity:

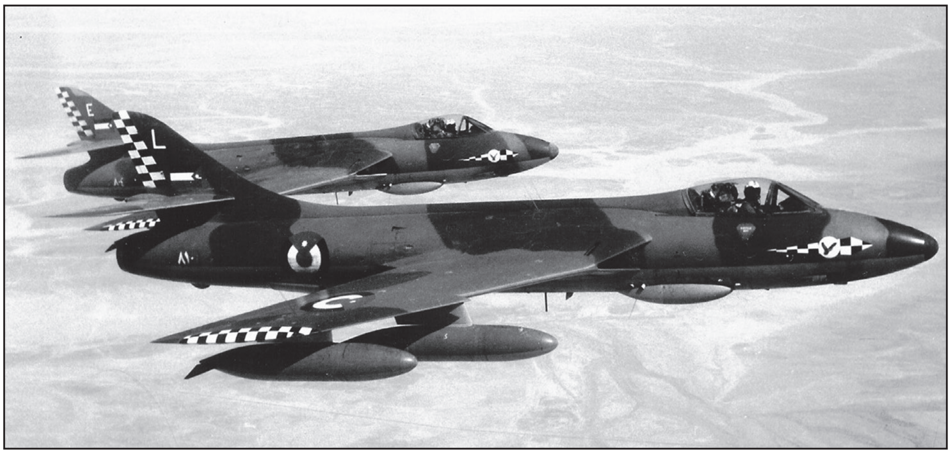
> Nasri Jumean, Firas Ajlouni, Jihad Irsheid, Wasfi Ammari, Kamal Haddad and Zeid Toukan ferried six Hunters to Taif and were briefed for an attack sortie expected to be flown the next morning. Before leaving Jordan, we were not allowed to talk to anyone about this mission … I thought it a bit ridiculous as the only weapons for our aircraft were guns: we only had rockets with dummy warheads. Furthermore, when we calculated the route to the targets, we found out we could get there – but not get back. Therefore, our superiors told us to continue for Aden, as the RAF had been briefed to accept RJAF aircraft. Alternatively, we could bail out over friendly tribes … Jamal Said, who was going to Amman the next day, then told us he would try and persuade our superiors to change the plans: if they did, he would stay in Amman the next day, and if not, he would be back in the afternoon. In the meantime, we continued planning our mission, and flew some orientation flights around Taif [his logbook shows a 55-minute flight].
>
> The afternoon came and Sahel did not return, and we all thought, 'Thank God'. Then, between 1800 and 1900 a message came from Amman asking if Sahel had arrived. They thought he must have crashed somewhere underway … then we heard on the radio that Sahel had defected to Egypt. Our attack was postponed for 48 hours … The Royal Saudi Air Force was not allowed to fly for political reasons and we were subsequently surrounded by Saudi troops as they thought that all the RJAF pilots in Saudi Arabia would defect too. The CO of the Jordanian Army contingent in Saudi Arabia, Brigadier Omar al-Madaneh, came in the evening after Sahel's defection and gave us a speech about loyalty, etc. The next evening, after the other two pilots defected, he came back to give us the same speech again. Prime Minister Wasfi Tell had to fly to Taiz to urge the other pilots to fly our planes to Jordan, not to Egypt. Eventually, we returned back to Mafraq on 21 November, feeling like dirt.

Tahsin Fuad Hussein Saima was one of the Jordanian Hunter pilots who defected to Egypt in 1962. He immediately joined the UARAF and flew MiG-19Ss during the June 1967 War with Israel before continuing a highly successful career in Egypt and reaching the rank of air commodore/ brigadier general in the early 1970s. (Group 73)

King Hussein offered amnesty to the pilots who defected, while Nasser, on Hussein's request, released all five RJAF aircraft. Nevertheless, most of the defectors subsequently continued their careers with the UARAF. Saima and Sandoukah joined No. 20 Squadron of the Egyptian air force and flew MiG-19s. Saima commanded a squadron of Sukhoi Su-7BMK fighter-bombers during the October 1973 War with Israel before retiring with the rank of major general; Sandoukah retired as a colonel due to illness. Another pilot rose in rank and qualification to become one of most successful Egyptian ground-controllers ever, colloquially known by his call sign – 'Jordan'.[30]

An indirect result of this failure was the disbandment of No. 2 Squadron RJAF, on 11 April 1964, as recorded by the official Diary of No. 1 Squadron:

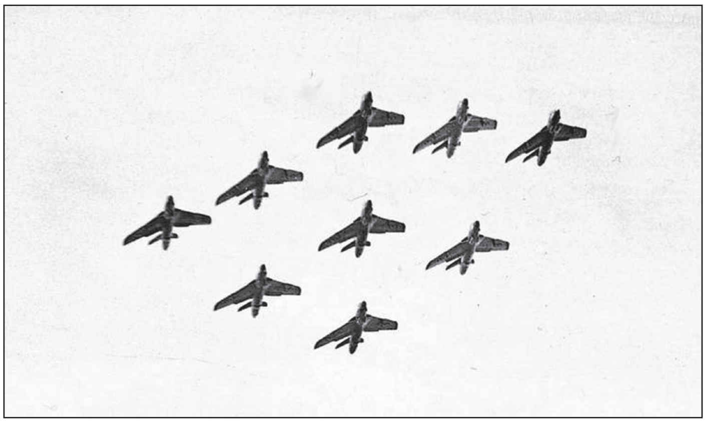
> It has been decided that the two squadrons – Nos 1 and 2 – join up to make one squadron. Command of the new squadron was given to Captain Firas Ajlouni, who was previously commanding No. 1. The building which previously housed No. 2 Squadron



A rare photograph of two Hunter F.Mk 6 in the colours of No. 2 Squadron, RJAF, sometime in 1962 or 1963. Their checkerboards were in white and black

One of the RJAF defectors (right) gives a statement to Egyptian media in the presence of an UARAF officer (left) after his arrival in November 1962. (Nour Bardai Collection)

Two of the RJAF defectors in Egypt in 1962. Several of the RJAF Hunter pilots who defected to Egypt in November of that year continued very successful careers with the Egyptian Air Force, two of them flying MiG-19s with No. 20 Squadron during the June 1967 War. (Nour Bardai Collection)



In 1962, No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, established a display team named Hashemite Diamond. Consisting of nine aircraft, this put up several public performances. The first of these took place on 14 November 1962 over Amman. (RJAF)

was allocated to house the newly-formed No. 1. Commanding officer of No. 2 Squadorn, Captain Nasri Jimean, was appointed Acting OC King Hussein Air Base.

This unit was further reorganised into the Prince Abdullah Flight (CO 1st Lieutenant Zeid Toukan) and the Prince Faysal Flight (CO 1st Lieutenant Jihad Irsheid). During the following months, No. 1 Squadron established a display team named Hashemite Diamond. Consisting of nine aircraft, this put up its first display over Amman on 14 November 1962, during celebrations for the king's birthday. Reformed in 1965, Hashemite Diamond flew three shows in June of that year. Subsequently, the number of operational Hunters began to fluctuate considerably. Not only were two additional aircraft lost in separate accidents in 1964 and 1965, but most of the former mounts of No. 2 Squadron were returned to the UK for conversion to FGA.Mk 9 standard, designated F.Mk 73. As of May 1967, work on eight Hunters was complete and the aircraft were back in Jordan, but at least two others were not. For this reason, as of 5 June 1967, No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, had only 19 operational Hunters.

3

NEW START IN IRAQ

A series of bitter internal conflicts began to rear their head within Iraq in 1961 and 1962. A war against the Kurds in the north of the country broke out in September 1961, with insurgents under Mustafa Barzani – supported by Iran and the US – overrunning a number of Iraqi Army garrisons before reaching the gates of

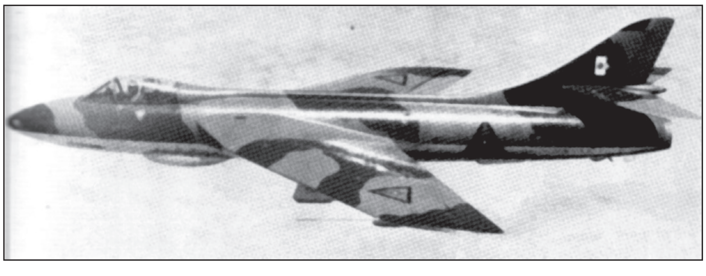
Mosul, Kirkuk and Erbil. The IrAF led the counteroffensive, flying hundreds of combat sorties and forcing the Kurds to withdraw into the mountains during the winter of 1962. This campaign proved highly unpopular throughout the Iraqi armed forces, where resentment against Qassim's rule intensified because of decisions that caused serious difficulties for the economy. Furthermore, Qasim's concerns over a possible coup d'état against him prevented the organisation of two divisions deployed against the Kurds under a unified command. Confrontation with the Kurds also brought Iraq to the verge of a war with Turkey. On 16 August 1962, an IrAF Il-28 (construction number 6540) was shot down by Republic F-84F Thunderjet fighters of the Turkish Air Force, while attacking Kurdish villages inside Turkey. By early 1963, Kurdish insurgents were in effective control of nearly all of northern Iraq: the military failure resulted in Qasim becoming even more isolated, both internally and externally, and only remaining on good terms with the Soviets. When Qasim launched a campaign of wholesale retirement or transfer of army officers whom he believed disloyal to his reign, and arrested over 200 people associated with the Iraqi Ba'ath Party, the military launched a coup against him.

IRAQI HUNTERS IN COUP D'ETATS

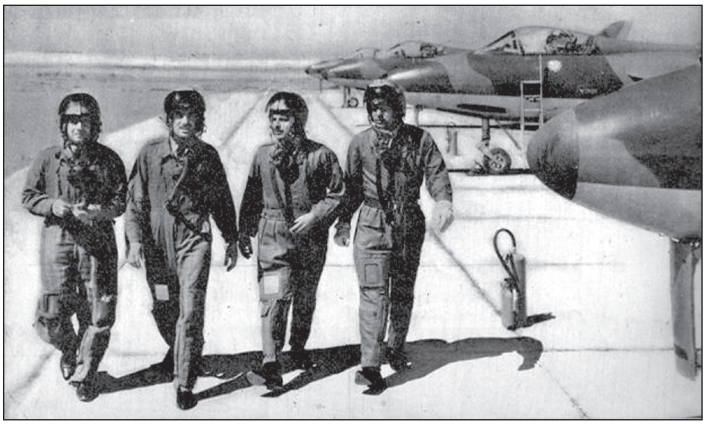
On the cold and sunny morning of 8 February 1963, an armoured battalion of the Iraqi Army occupied the Radio Baghdad station in Abu Ghrayb. Simultaneously, as Indian Air Force instructors were preparing to make several training flights with their Iraqi students at the IrAF Flying College, most of No. 9 Squadron's MiG-19s were lined up on the tarmac at Rashid AB, refuelled and armed, and ready to take off at short notice. Recognising the importance of this unit and its aircraft for the protection of the government in Baghdad, the coup plotters – led by Abd as-Salam Arif and Major General Tahar Yahia – decided that it had to be neutralised at the very start of their uprising, which was to be undertaken almost simultaneously with an assassination attempt against the C-in-C IrAF.

Around 0900, a solitary Hunter from No. 6 Squadron, flown by Captain Munthir al-Windawi, appeared above Rashid. After circling the air base to identify his targets, al-Windawi popped up, rolled out and then dived at the line of MiGs from No. 9 Squadron, opening fire with all four of his 30mm ADEN cannons. Blasting all the way as he went, his attack left a number of MiGs as smouldering wreckage. Although the Indian instructors later confirmed the destruction of six MiG-19s, some of the burning wrecks they saw belonged to four MiG-21s of No. 11 Squadron. These were destroyed minutes later by two MiG-17Fs from No. 7 Squadron, as recalled by an eyewitness, interviewed on condition of anonymity:

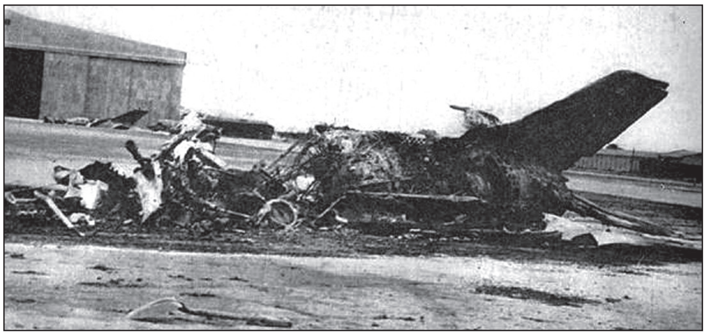
> Captain Munthir al-Windawi was not alone during his attack on Rashid AB … He destroyed a row of MiG-19s of No. 9 Squadron. But, a few minutes later, a pair of MiG-17s from No. 7 Squadron attacked Rashid AB too, and they strafed and destroyed four MiG-21F-13s of No. 11 Squadron. I do not know the names of the pilots involved.[31]



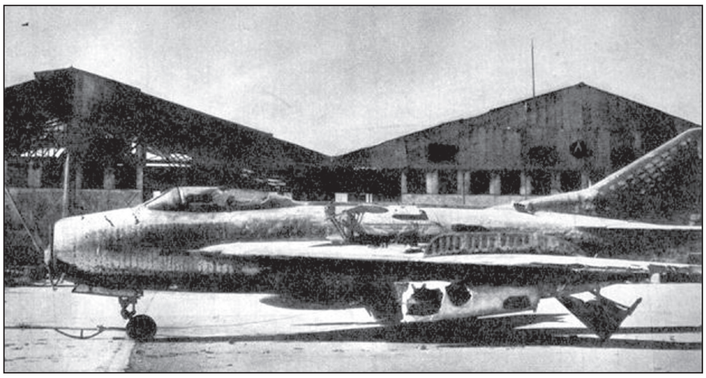
A rare photograph of an IrAF Hunter taken during the time of Qasim's rule, showing the F.Mk 6 with serial number 396. Still operated by No. 6 Squadron IrAF, which was primarily staffed by pan-Arabist officers and members of the Ba'ath Party, Hunters played a crucial role during the coup against Qassim on 8 February 1963. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)



A group of IrAF Hunter pilots with their aircraft at Habbaniyah airfield in 1963. One of them, Captain Munthir al-Windawi, disabled a significant portion of the MiG-19s and MiG-21s of Nos 9 and 11 Squadrons on the ground at Rashid, in turn enabling the coup plotters to reach their objectives. (Nour Bardai Collection)

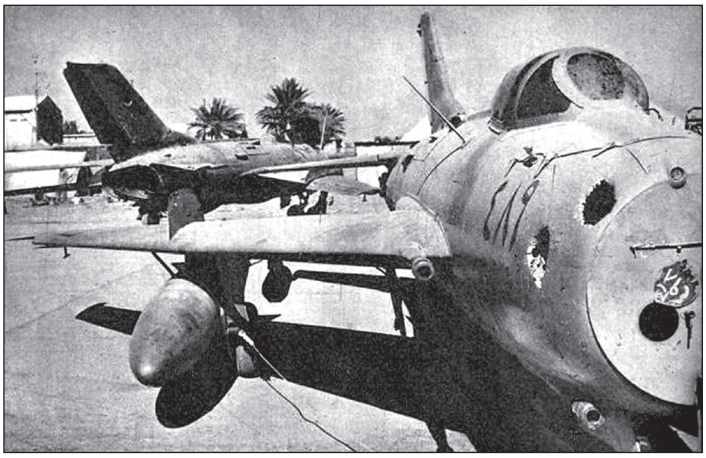


Wreckage of several MiG-19Ss of No. 9 Squadron and MiG-21F-13s of No. 11 Squadron, IrAF, destroyed during Munthir al-Windawi's attack on Rashid AB, and a follow-up attack by two MiG-17Fs from No. 7 Squadron. (Nour Bardai Collection)

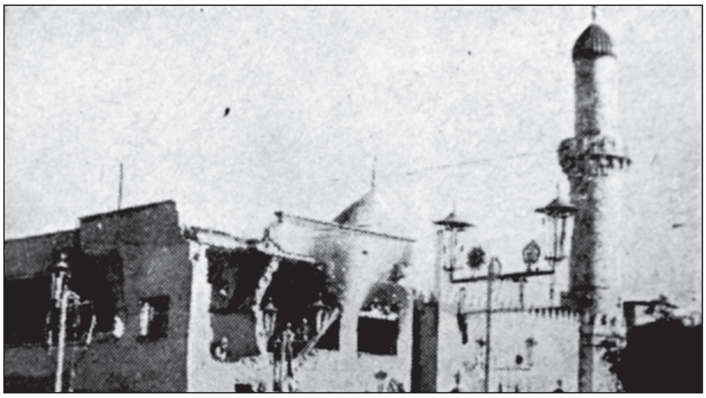


The fourth MiG-19S hit by al-Windawi: although the local fire-brigade extinguished the flames, the aircraft was subsequently written off. Note two big holes from 30mm shells fired by Windawi's Hunter that hit the port (left) underwing drop tank of the MiG. (Nour Bardai Collection)

With Hunters and MiG-17Fs in the air above them and many of the MiGs flown by loyal pilots either destroyed or damaged, Nos 9 and 11 Squadrons were unable to intervene during the subsequent power struggle in Baghdad.[32] In Baghdad, Major General Jalal al-Awqati survived an assassination attempt in the street, but Qasim, his bodyguards and a group of his closest followers were forced to take refuge inside the building of the Ministry of Defence. When communist activists sided with the few loyal units, street fighting



Two other MiG-19Ss attacked by al-Windawi were also damaged by 30mm cannon fire. The cockpit of the MiG in the foreground – serial number 489 – seems to have been gutted by fire. (Nour Bardai Collection)



Scanned from a contemporary Egyptian newspaper, this grainy photograph shows the damage to the Ministry of Defence building in Baghdad caused by No. 6 Squadron Hunters (and No. 7 Squadron's MiG-17s) in the course of some 60 attack sorties flown during the coup of 8 February 1963. (Nour Bardai Collection)

كان الونداوى
يطوف بغداد فى
هذا الكوكب المسلح
.. لقد استطاع ان
يضلل الكثير من
الشباب العراقى
تصوير : شوقى مصطفى

Captain Munthir al-Windawi entering Baghdad to a hero's welcome. Following his participation in the February 1963 coup, al-Windawi gained immense popularity – especially among the Iraqi youth– comparable to modern-day pop stars. (Nour Baradi Collection)

Captain Munthir al-Windawi enjoying a hero's welcome by the population of Baghdad. (Nour Bardai Collection)

erupted and the coup plotters called for help from the Habbaniyah Air Wing. Hurriedly promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel and assigned as the new C-in-C IrAF, Arif Abd ar-Razzaq ordered his pilots into action without hesitation. Around noon, two MiG-17s from No. 7 Squadron – though flown by pilots from No. 11 Squadron – appeared over Baghdad to attack the Ministry of Defence with unguided rockets and cannon fire. They were soon followed by Hunters from No. 6 Squadron and then further MiG-17s. During that and the following day, IrAF fighter-bombers from Habbaniyah airfield flew about 60 attack sorties, completely demolishing their target. Shaken by air attacks, Qasim attempted to negotiate. He offered to surrender in return for safe passage out of the country. The coup leaders, however, turned down this offer, and on the afternoon of 9 February, Qasim finally had to give up. He was arrested together with Colonel Fadhil Mahdawi, the hated presiding officer of the infamous People's Court, and Major General al-Awqati. After a short trial, all three were summarily executed on 14 February 1963.

The degree to which the Iraqi military – and thus IrAF Hunter-pilots too – subsequently became involved in domestic politics can only be described as 'endemic'. The highest policy-making body – and de-facto government – became the National Council of Revolutionary Command (NCRC), in which Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr – another of the Free Officers – became Prime Minister and as-Salam Arif the President. The NCRC practically terminated all military cooperation with Moscow and forced over 3,000 Soviet instructors to leave the country. Subsequently, using lists provided by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), it launched a campaign purging all communists and their sympathisers from the military. This process hit the IrAF very hard, as some of its units were primarily known for their political associations. For example, the Hunter-equipped No. 6 Squadron was considered 'pan-Arabist', while Nos 5 and 9 Squadrons were 'pro-communist'. The CO of No. 9 Squadron, Lieutenant Colonel Sarah, had therefore been removed from his position and replaced by Major Wafiq Abdallah ar-Ramadani during the coup. Similarly, Lieutenant Colonel el-Emir was replaced by Major Fahad Abd el-Haley as-Saldoon as CO of No. 11 Squadron.[33]

The situation worsened once Major General Hardan Abd el-Rhefal at-Tikriti was appointed as the new C-in-C IrAF, on 1 May 1963, with ar-Razzaq being assigned a higher position within the Ministry of Defence (at-Tikriti remained in this position only until 5 October 1963, when ar-Razzaq reassumed the command). Regardless of whether they were communists or not, with the exception of five officers who had participated in the February coup flying MiG-17s, practically all the pilots of Nos 9 and 11 Squadrons were arrested and flying operations of both units frozen. Flying by the remaining five pilots was limited to an absolute minimum pending a decision about the fate of these units. That said, not all the IrAF pilots had sided with the coup plotters: several defected and left the country. For example, Aboud Salem left for Jordan, where he joined the air force and subsequently flew Hunters with No. 1 Squadron RJAF.[34]

SECOND HUNTER ORDER

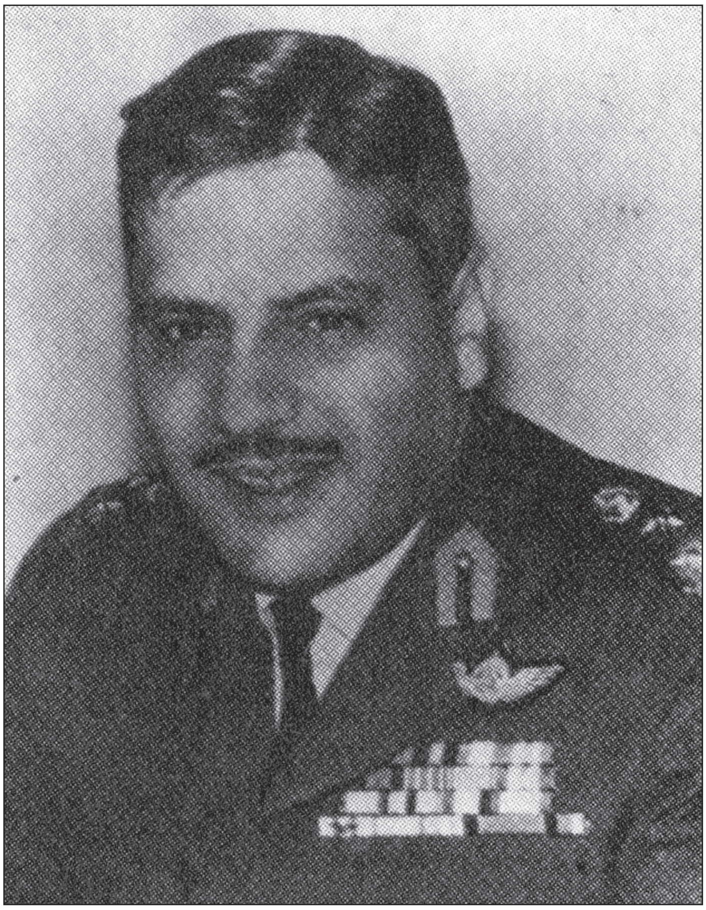
Soon after establishing himself in power, President Arif attempted to join Iraq with Egypt and Syria. Nasser reacted very cautiously, and the prospect of a new United Arab Republic evaporated as early as the second half of 1963, primarily because the only terms the Egyptian president was ready to accept were based upon the complete subordination of Iraq and Syria to his direction. On the contrary, when the plan for a new UAR collapsed, Nasser launched a campaign of challenging the legitimacy of the Ba'ath government in Iraq, seriously eroding internal respect for it. Unsurprisingly, the pan-Arabists within the Iraqi military soon began organising a new coup.

When Nasser turned down Arif's overtures, the Iraqi president began improving his ties to the West, particularly the UK and US. The influence of IrAF officers who had earlier flown Hunters rose significantly throughout 1963, particularly once Major Fahad Abd el-Haley as-Saydoon was assigned the post of Air Attaché in London. Within months – and together with the new C-in-C IrAF, Major General al-Tikriti, and Major General ar-Razzaq – as-Saydoon proved critical in the IrAF's decision to order a new, much larger batch of Hunters.

Negotiations were opened as early as mid-May 1963. Only a few days later, on 21 May, the British Air Attaché in Baghdad – accompanied by a Mr Brown of the then Hakwer Siddeley de Havilland Group – met al-Tikriti, subsequently reporting back to London:

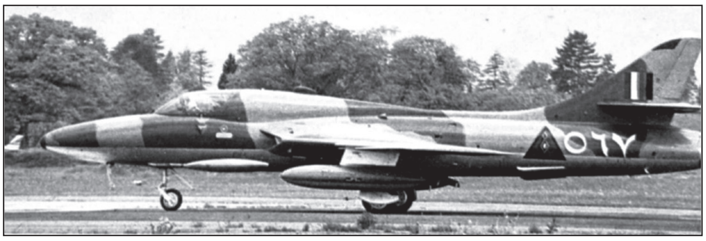
> Tikriti said he now wished to commit the Iraqi Air Force irrevocably to British sources of supply and training and in this he was supported by the Minister of Defence … Tikriti said that although the Soviets seemed to have accepted that they had lost the political battle in Iraq, they were still anxious to supply Iraq with arms. For example, they had recently offered two squadrons of MiG-21s at knockdown prices. Tikriti hoped that Britain would be prepared to assist by supplying him with what he needed to rebuild his air force; otherwise there would be really no alternative but to resume the ties with the USSR.[35]

Eager to ascertain new orders, Hawker Siddeley promptly dispatched its Hunter T.Mk 66 demonstrator to Iraq, and agreed to prepare eight ex-Belgian Air Force F.Mk 6s – upgraded to FGA. Mk 9 standard through the installation of the Avon 207 engine and modified wings that could carry heavier loads – for delivery 'within a few months'. Some private companies began providing 30mm ammunition for ADEN cannons (and 0.303in ammunition for the machine guns installed in IrAF Provosts), as well as 500lb bombs. The RAF signalled its preparedness to provide the first batch of 2,000 (out of an eventual 20,000) rockets of 3in calibre for delivery 'within days', with the remainder to follow within 18 months. At least as important, the RAF agreed to accept 50 Iraqi pilot and navigator trainees, 20 pilots and 20 Iraqi ground staff to its educational facilities, beginning in summer and autumn 1963.[36] Al-Tikriti then visited London, in July 1963, and negotiated a deal

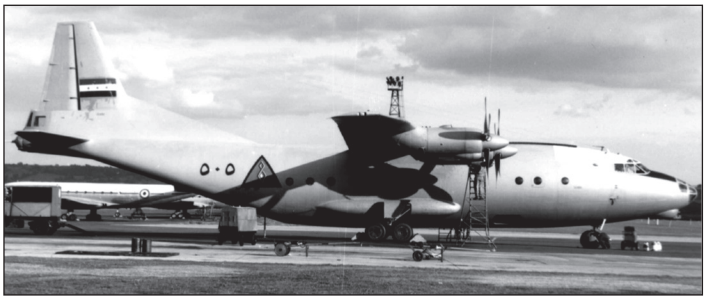


Arif ar-Razzaq, a highly experienced Hunter pilot and former CO No. 6 Squadron, played a prominent role in many IrAF-related affairs during the late 1950s and 1960s, eventually being appointed C-in-C of the Air Force. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

Major General Hardan Abd el-Rhefal at-Tikriti was appointed C-in-C IrAF on 1 May 1963. Together with ar-Razzaq, he instigated a major re-equipment process with aircraft and armament sourced from the UK. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)



The Hunter T.Mk 66 demonstrator sent to Iraq in spring 1963 to aid in the conversion of additional IrAF pilots, but also to demonstrate the usefulness of two-seat conversion trainers. Its appearance prompted Iraq to order three T.Mk 69s. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



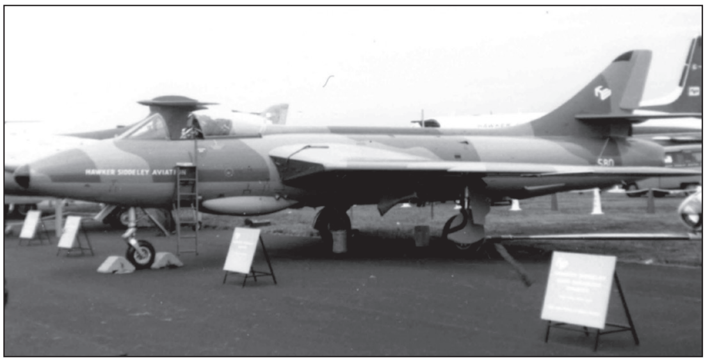
During the process of overhauls and upgrades of Iraqi F.Mk 6s to F.Mk59 standard, An-12B transports of No. 23 Squadron, IrAF, became regular visitors to RAF Lyneham, where they were loaded with crates of spares and assorted equipment of British origin in Iraqi service. This operation lasted from 1963 until 1975. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

for 22 Hunters (including the eight examples mentioned above). Designated F.Mk 59, these aircraft began arriving in Iraq in April and May 1964, entering service with No. 6 Squadron to replace the older F.Mk 6s – survivors of which were subsequently sent to the UK for an overhaul and upgrade to a similar standard.

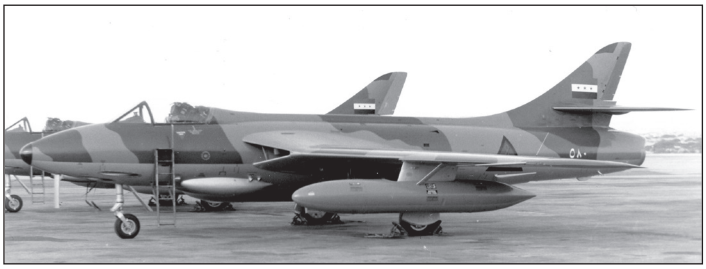
After studying their experiences from the war with the Kurds, and recognising the advantages of such a superb all-round combat aircraft, in early 1964, the Iraqis followed with another order for 12 Hunters. This time, Hawker overhauled ex-Dutch F.Mk 6s and brought them up to FGA.Mk 9 standard designated as F.Mk 59A, with deliveries commencing in December 1964.

The availability of additional Hunters prompted the IrAF to begin planning the establishment of an entire air wing with three squadrons. Consequently, later in 1964, this contract was extended through orders for four additional ex-Dutch and 13 ex-Belgian F.Mk 6s. These were delivered following obligatory overhauls and upgrades to FGA.Mk 9 standard as F.Mk 59Bs, between September 1965 and May 1967, though it seems that several aircraft were broken up for spares immediately after their arrival. These acquisitions of single-seat Hunters were supported by the purchase of up to six Hunter T.Mk 66s and T.Mk 69 two-seaters, leased or purchased outright over this period in order to ease the conversion process of additional new pilots.

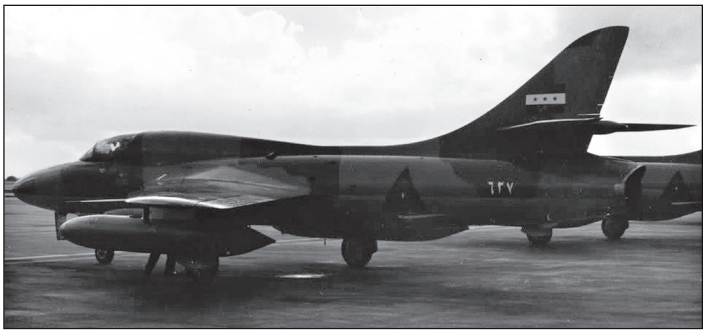
As soon as enough reconditioned F.Mk 6s and additional F.Mk 59s became available, the IrAF established No. 29 Squadron. This unit officially came into being on 18 November 1965 at H-3 airfield, in western Iraq, under the command of Major Ismail Wakti. Following work-ups, it was redeployed to Habbaniyah AB on 21 December 1966, where it continued flying Hunters until that type was withdrawn from service in 1981. The planned third squadron was never established, although a Hunter Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) did come into existence at Habbaniyah. This included a number of British and Indian instructors and several experienced officers from No. 6 Squadron (led by Major Mumtaz Abdel Ali



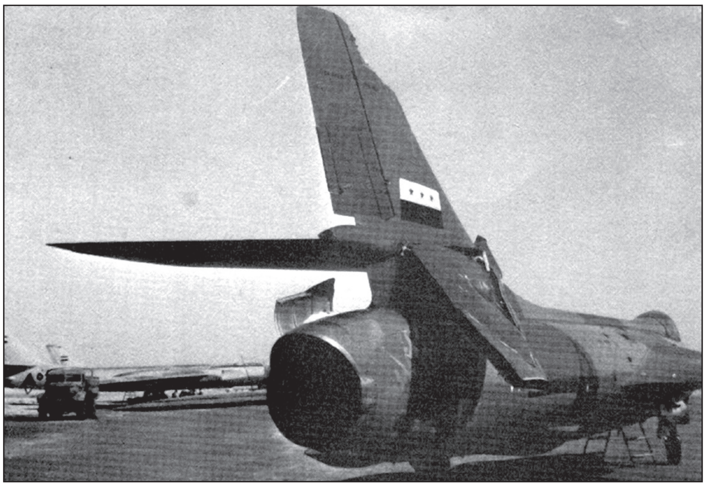
An ex-Belgian Hunter F.Mk 6 (formerly IF07) – upgraded to F.Mk 59 standard and given the serial number 580 prior to delivery to Iraq – as seen in 1964, shortly before delivery to Iraq. At the time, these were some of the most advanced ground-attack fighters in the Middle East, armed with four 30mm ADEN cannon and various combinations of unguided rockets. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



The Hunter F.Mk 59 serial number 570 at Chivenor prior to its delivery flight to Iraq (which took place on 18 March 1964). This aircraft was to see a long and distinguished career with the IrAF. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

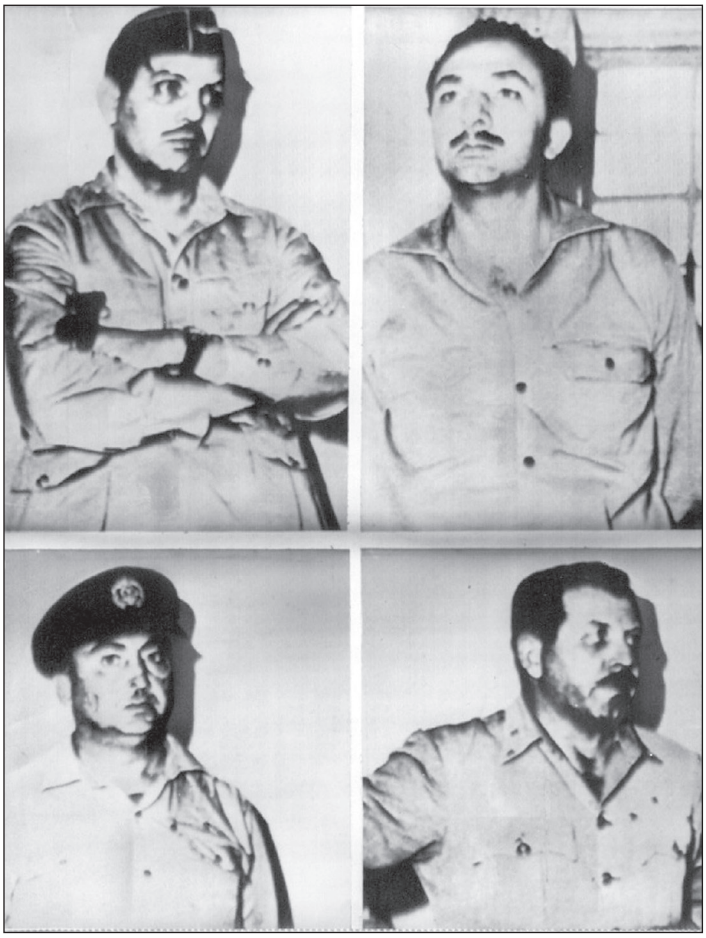


The third Hunter T.Mk 69 ordered by Iraq received the IrAF serial number 627. It was delivered on 14 January 1967 and entered service with the Habbaniyah-based Hunter OCU, then under the command of a British instructor pilot. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



One of two Hunters involved in a training accident that occurred at al-Taqqadum air base in 1966 when the aircraft flown by 2nd Lieutenants Samir Zaki and Hassan Khither collided during a gunnery exercise. Both made safe emergency landings. Of interest are the two Tu-16s of No. 10 Squqadron in the background. This unit shared al-Taqqadum with three Hunter squadrons and No. 8 Squadron equipped with Il-28s. (Tom Cooper Collection)

This An-12B was probably the last of the first six aircraft of this type acquired by Iraq in 1963. Two years later, such an aircraft flew the 5 September 1965 coup plotters into exile in the UK. Most of them were never to see Iraq again. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



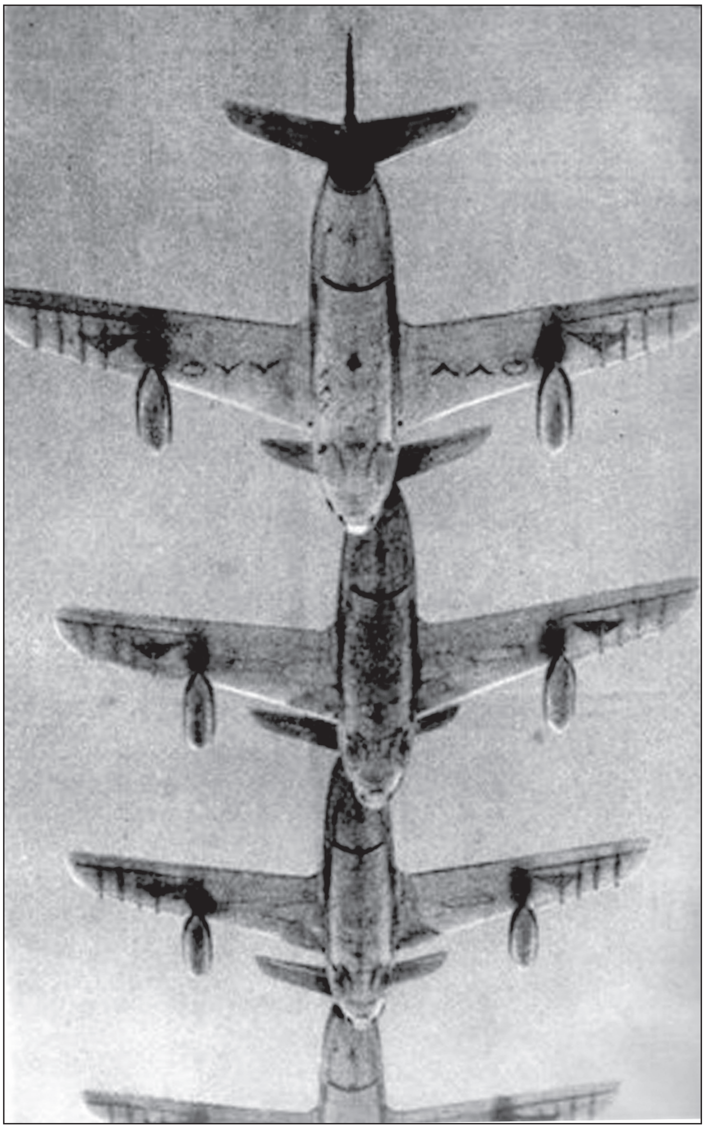
Hunter-related coup-plotters: after his failed coup attempt in 1965, Brigadier General ar-Razzak – a former IrAF pilot who flew Ansons, Furies, Vampires, Venoms and Hunters, and later served as C-in-C IrAF, the Minister of Defence and Prime Minister – was arrested and stripped of his badges of rank (upper left photo). The same happened to another Hunter-pilot, Major Farouk Sabry (upper right), Major Ahmed Rashid (lower left), commander of Mosul AB, and Colonel Youssef Bashi (lower right), commander of the 4th Division. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

as-Saydoon), under the command of a British pilot known only as 'Captain Crow'.[37]

Considering the great Iraqi satisfaction with the Hunter, it is unsurprising that the IrAF also seriously considered purchasing the then brand-new English Electric Lighting interceptor. Although ar-Razzaq test-flew the two-seat conversion variant accompanied by an RAF pilot, in 1964, Baghdad decided not to acquire any, not only because the British were experiencing a number of teething problems with the type, but mainly because early variants of the Lightning lacked an internal cannon and were ill-suited for ground-attack purposes. Another reason that might have been influential for this Iraqi decision was ar-Razzaq's increasing involvement in politics.

The Kurdish insurgency erupted again in April 1965, and under pressure from the military, President Arif appointed Brigadier General ar-Razzaq as Prime Minister on 5 September. Barely seven days later, when Arif was in Morocco for the Third Summit of the Arab League, ar-Razzaq – supported by a number of IrAF officers – launched a coup attempt. This was almost immediately crushed by pro-government troops led by Major General Abd ar-Rahman Arif, the acting Chief of Staff and President Arif's brother, and ar-Razzaq and other plotters sent into exile in the UK, together with their families. With this act, the IrAF was not only left without practically all of its most experienced Hunter pilots, but the era of pro-British officers completely dominating the air force came to an abrupt end.

During the following days, President Arif completely reorganised his government and changed much of his internal and foreign policy. In an attempt to isolate the Kurds from their foreign supporters, he issued an order for 19 or 20 MiG-21FL interceptors to Moscow. Pleased with the re-establishment of their ties to Baghdad, the Soviets were swift to deliver: the aircraft in question arrived by ship to Basra in December 1965, only a few days after a group of 12 Iraqi pilots completed their conversion courses in the USSR. On 8 January 1966, a new unit equipped with the type, No. 17 Squadron, was officially established at Rashid AB, under the command of



A formation of IrAF Hunter F.Mk 59s, sometime around 1965. Of interest is the application of the serial number 577 below the wings of the aircraft in the foreground, indicating that the Iraqis kept such RAF traditions alive, despite the renewal of their relations with the USSR in 1966. (Nour Bardai Collection)

Major Durhit Ibrahim. As-Salam Arif was killed in the crash of a Mil Mi-4 helicopter (operated by No. 2 Squadron, IrAF) only a few months later, on 15 April. However, his brother, Major General Abd ar-Rahman Arif, subsequently reinforced the policy of purchasing arms from the Soviet Union – even more so after he found his reign threatened by another coup attempt led by Brigadier General ar-Razaq. In June, Arif visited Moscow, demonstratively denounced US policy in Vietnam and signed the next order for a total of 35 MiG-21s, mainly consisting of MiG-21PFMs, but including at least six reconditioned, ex-Soviet Air Force MiG-21F-13s. Once again, the Soviets followed with very prompt deliveries: by the end of 1966, No. 17 Squadron already functioned as an OCU for pilots of the re-established No. 9 and No. 11 Squadrons, and the future No. 14 Squadron, and all four units were in the process of being equipped with MiG-21s. With this, the IrAF entered an era in which it was dominated by officers that preferred Soviet-built to Western combat aircraft, and which in the 1970s was to internally become known as the 'Sukhoi clique'.

4

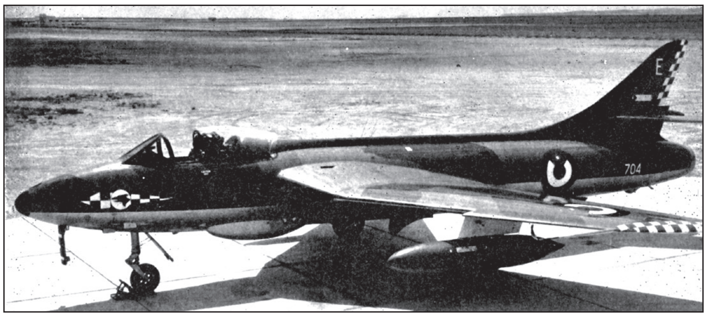
FIRST BATTLES WITH MIRAGES

While the IrAF was in the process of purchasing additional Hunters between 1964 and 1967, the RJAF Hunters were involved in routine peace-time exercises as the air force continued striving to train additional pilots, send proven officers for further training abroad and improve overall readiness and combat effectiveness. Contrary to Iraqi practices, which emphasised close air support as the primary task of the type, and although experiencing significant problems with aircraft serviceability, the RJAF ran a series of air combat exercises during the spring and summer of 1964. These were soon to prove their worth because of increasing tensions with Israel.

Back in 1951, Israel unilaterally began construction of its National Water Carrier (NWC), which diverted immense amounts of water from the River Jordan system. The US and the UN had attempted to develop a regional plan for an equitable apportionment and utilisation of the River Jordan and its tributaries among the various riparian countries as early as 1953, but Israel strongly opposed any such plans and continued taking away as much water as possible.[38]

Arabs were left with no choice but to develop their own projects. In cooperation with the US Administration for International Development (AID), Jordan launched a project for siphoning water out of the Yarmuk River north-east of its confluence with the River Jordan, and transporting it south via a canal running parallel with and just east of the Jordan. Thus came into being the East Ghor Canal – one of the most successful development projects in the history of the kingdom of Jordan. While the East Ghor Canal was initially ignored by the Israelis, a similar Syrian project on the Banias River became more than a thorn in Israel's side. Together with the establishment of the United Arab Command (UAC) – officially a body envisaged to coordinate military cooperation between Arab states in their struggle with Israel, but actually a mere gesture without substance – Syrian construction works were used as the primary explanation for Israeli provocations and then full-scale military attacks into Syria. While the usual Israeli explanation is that this so-called 'Water War' began only in 1964, the first such Israeli attacks on Syria were launched in 1962-1963.

Weakened after its recent separation from the United Arab Republic, a series of coups and political unrest, the Syrian military was hopelessly out of condition to stop Israeli attacks. Therefore, the government in Damascus began deploying groups of armed Palestinian refugees – largely the Fatah – for attacks on Israel. As the number of attacks by the Fatah increased, the Israelis retaliated with ever more force, and the conflict eventually began to spill over into Jordan.



The Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 704/E (ex XF498) seen in full colours of No. 1 Squadron, including wingtips and rudders chequered in red and white, in early 1964. (RJAF)

Although Jordan was at odds with Syria, and King Hussein repeatedly signalled to Israel his intention not to get drawn into any water-related disputes, the Israeli Defence Force/Air Force (IDF/AF) – recently re-equipped with brand-new, Mach-2 capable Dassault Mirage IIICJ interceptors – began provoking the RJAF in 1964.

PROBLEMS AND IMPROVEMENTS

During the spring of 1964, training of Jordanian Hunter pilots was repeatedly hampered by poor serviceability of their aircraft. The primary reason for problems appears to have been intensive training operations, as can be seen in several excerpts from the Diary of this unit, including the following:

> Wednesday, 6 May [1964]
> Normal flying programme was carried out. Serviceability is not good at all. Out of 14 sorties 10 aircraft came down with snags. From now onwards every weekend will be a long weekend in compensation for the long daily working hours.
>
> Thursday, 7 May
> During the weekend, four aircraft flew on an army cooperation sortie. After doing their mission they were bounced by a fifth aircraft and forced into combat. 1st Lt Smadi flamed out in combat and proceeded with a forced landing pattern overhead base. He landed without trouble.

Thanks to longer periods allowed for rest and recuperation of flying and ground crew, the serviceability improved significantly by the end of May. This enabled the crews of No. 1 Squadron to launch a series of air combat exercises later that year using towed 'darts' as targets and gun-camera films for post-mission de-briefs.

Furthermore, the RJAF began assembling its own napalm tanks. These were created from old drop tanks (apparently left behind from RAF times and previously used by de Havilland Venoms). According to Zeid Toukan and Hamid Anwar, all the pilots of No. 1 Squadron refused to fly aircraft armed with such weapons, considering them too dangerous – until Anwar not only did so, but also performed aerobatics with these weapons attached. On 14 July 1964, indigenous napalm tanks were demonstrated to Egyptian representatives – with such impressive results that the Egyptians thought the pilots flying RJAF Hunters were British. Sadly, the unit experienced another mishap just a fortnight later, when the Hunter flown by 1st Lieutenant Amer Zaza 'spun and hit the ground' at the end of an air combat training sortie on 28 July.[39] Hamid Anwar, one of two Pakistani Air Force pilots detached to the RJAF as adviser at this time, recalled:

> We were up to 10,000ft [3,048m]. He went into a jerky motion and then went into a spin, came out, went into a dive and pulled back much too hard. The aircraft stalled and I told him to bail out. He was at 4,000-5,000ft [1,219-1,524m] by then. He kept on going. Finally, he bailed out but too late. When the aircraft hit the ground, the debris flew up and hit him.

DECEMBER 1964 AIR BATTLE

During late September 1964, the RJAF began recording a number of violations of Jordanian airspace by Israeli Mirages, as recorded by the Diary of No. 1 Squadron:

> Thursday, 23 September
> Five aircraft took off to Aqaba for booms and beat ups, just a show of force.
>
> Friday, 24 September
> IDF fighters did not succeed in intercepting Green Section on return from Aqaba. Although our boys were spoiling for a scrap, it did not take place.
>
> Saturday, 25 September
> Our radar reported that Israeli aircraft fly parallel to our heading when we go south and the moment we are coming back from the south short of fuel they cross [a] few miles inside our borders. Major Anwar gave a thorough brief to pilots and the game was on. Hide and seek did not work too well with the enemy but if they knew what was going on, at least they'll realise that we are watching every move they do.
>
> Thursday, 1 Ocrober
> Two pairs were scrambled before midday to intercept IDF fighters but they stayed within their borders. Our formations stayed airborne for one hour and forty-five minutes. During the next week [squadron was] on stand-by for the beginning of work at the diversion of the River Jordan.
>
> Wednesday, 14 October
> RJAF No. 1 Fighter Squadron appeared in the headlines on Wednesday 14 October when water-skiing was taking place in Aqaba. Two enemy aircraft intruded in the area and His Majesty asked for a pair to patrol the area. When the intruders noticed the presence of our fighters, they cleared area quickly.

Following a period of bad weather, the Israelis penetrated the airspace over the West Bank – annexed by Jordan after the 1948-1949 Arab-Israeli War – again on 21 December, and the Red Section of Hunters of No.1 Squadron – including 1st Lieutenant George Matta and 1st Lieutenant Bader Zaza – was ordered to scramble. Red Section was followed by Blue Section – including Captain Firas Ajlouni and 1st Lieutenant Ghazi Smadi – as recorded in the Diary of this unit:

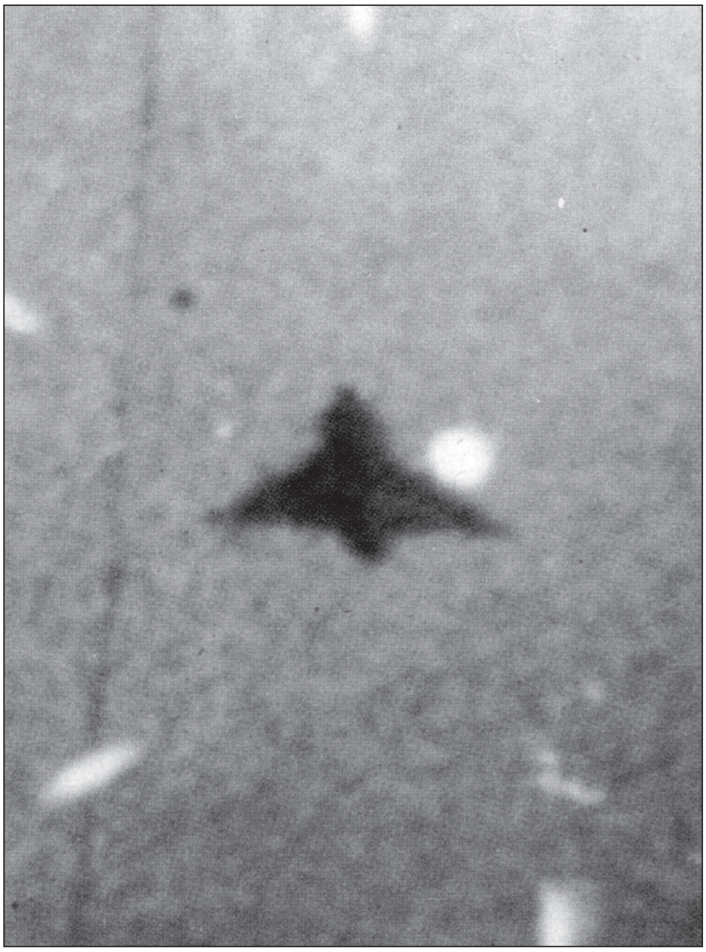
> At 11.15, the phone in the ops room rang and an order to scramble was given from GOC [general officer commanding]. Immediately, a pair was scrambled and was airborne at 11.20 hours. The radar took control and directed the fighters to Hebron area when enemy aircraft appeared on the tube. The fighters made for the area at medium altitude and on arrival started looking for the enemy aircraft. At 11.40hrs, another pair was scrambled and asked to go to Amman area. Meanwhile, Red Section was told by the GCI [ground control intercept] controller that a pair of bogies was inside the border, 6 milies at 6 o'clock to them. Red Leader then turned about hard with his No. 2 to face the enemy. During the turn the enemy fired at Red 2 but missed. Red Leader called Blue Section to head towards the area and informed the Blue Leader that they are engaged with an enemy pair of Mirages.

George Matta recalled this air combat as follows:

> After the GCI informed us that the enemy were behind us, we turned hard to face them. During the turn, the enemy fired at Red 2 but missed. I called the Blue Section to head in their direction

> and informed them that we are engaged with a pair of enemy Mirages. After the enemy fired, and since the enemy fighters were at high speed, the deflection was too much for us to hold and they passed through my line of flight. I saw them turning so I reversed into them. The enemy then split but their split was disorganised: the one that went low, the enemy formation leader, started to turn which helped me and I tried to get him in a scissors, although I knew a Mirage could handle very well at low speed. I dropped my speed fairly rapidly and asked my No. 2 to watch the high one. I had too much deflection at 600ft [183m] distance but the enemy reversed and helped me close the distance and reduce the deflection angle. I aimed and fired at 400ft [122m] and saw him go out of control - or that is what I thought. His wings rocked and suddenly the aircraft went down in a screaming dive, vertically. I followed him but he disappeared in a patch of stratus … At 3,000ft [914m] above the ground his angle of dive was still vertically down, so I reversed to see what happened to the other one. I saw him climbing and my No. 2 behind him, but knowing the speed of my No. 2 was low, I knew he could not remain behind the enemy. I called on the radio, 'Fire, No. 2!'. Bader Zaza fired as the range increased. By then we were low on fuel and Bader also out of ammo, and thus we disengaged … Firas and Ghazi meanwhile reached the Dead Sea approaching from northeast.

Firas Ajlouni led Blue Section into the airspace over the West Bank, where they sighted another pair of Mirages, as concluded by the Diary of No. 1 Squadron:



Still from a gun-camera film probably taken by George Matta during an air combat with Israeli Mirages on 21 December 1964. The Israelis denied losing any of their interceptors to RJAF Hunters: decades later, they declared that one of the involved Mirage IIICJs supposedly ran out of fuel while returning to base. (RJAF)

> Blue Section proceeded to the battle area and were in contact with a pair over the west side of the Dead Sea north of the hot springs and wasting no time, engaged in combat. Later everyone was on his own. Blue Leader managed to get behind a Mirage and opened fire. While turning he could see the tail plane of the enemy aircraft disintegrating. Blue 2 turned hard into an attacking Mirage and then reversed behind him at 2,000ft. He opened fire and saw thick smoke coming from the descending Mirage … Reports confirm three kills and one damaged.

While the Jordanians thus concluded that their pilots had shot down one Mirage and damaged three, and decorated all four involved pilots, the Israelis denied suffering any losses in combat.[40] On the contrary, according to their published accounts, only the Mirage IIICJ serial number 27 from No. 101 Squadron IDF/AF, flown by Michael Barazam, was lost due to fuel starvation, which resulted in a crash landing during an attempted emergency landing at Hatzor AB. The pilot ejected safely. The other three Mirages were said to have returned to their bases safely.[40]

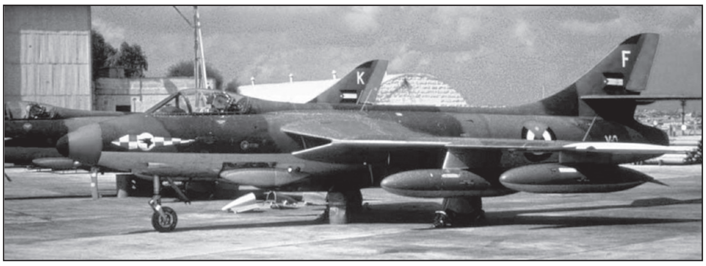
Ever since, the Israelis are insistent that it was the Jordanians who provoked this incident by penetrating Israeli airspace. However, an RAF flight lieutenant was in Ajloun radar station (installed and equipped by the Marconi company of the UK and officially named 'Prince Mohammed') at the time, and he confirmed that the Israeli jets were actually over the West Bank, and thus within Jordanian airspace.

REPLACEMENTS AND UPGRADES

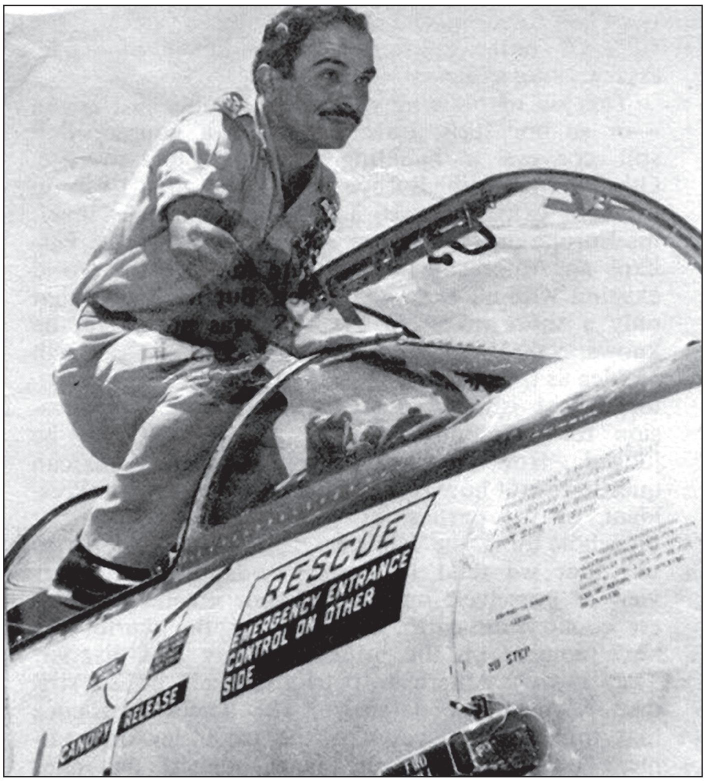
Realising that the superior speed and missile-armament of the Mirage IIICJ were offering a significant advantage to the IDF/AF, the Jordanians began to search for a comparative interceptor in 1965. King Hussein entered negotiations with the administration of US President Lyndon B. Johnson for acquisition of supersonic fighters. Initially, the Americans turned such requests down and offered to finance a purchase of Mirages from France instead. However, shortly after Amman and Paris opened negotiations, US officials denied such an agreement and instead opened secret negotiations, resulting in a promise to supply quantities of US-made main battle tanks (MBTs), air defence weapons (including MIM-23 HAWK surface-to-air missiles [SAMs]) and F-104 Starfighters instead.[41] On 9 April 1966, Jordan was granted permission to receive 32 F-104As and two F-104B conversion trainers that were leased to the Republic of China Air Force in Taiwan (at that time better-known as the Chinese Nationalist Air Force).

While securing the US agreement to deliver F-104s, the RJAF decided to overhaul and recondition all of its Hunters to FGA. Mk 9-like standard, designated F.Mk 73. Correspondingly, the number of operational Hunters in Jordan – and the number of available pilots – began to fluctuate during 1965 and 1966, as they were gradually sent to the UK for related work. As of May 1967, overhauls and upgrades of eight aircraft were complete and these were back in Jordan, but at least two others were not. Furthermore, in late 1966, many RJAF pilots were sent to the USA to undergo conversion courses for F-104s, expected to be completed during the late spring of 1967, by which time all the necessary installations at Mafraq were to be in place.

Meanwhile, training of a new class of Hunter-pilots experienced a severe blow on 15 August 1965 – just a week after Jihad Irsheid took over from Firas Ajlouni as CO No. 1 Squadron – when the Hunter T.Mk 66B serial number 714/P crashed near the road from Amman to Mafraq AB, killing its crew of 1st Lieutenant Ahmad and



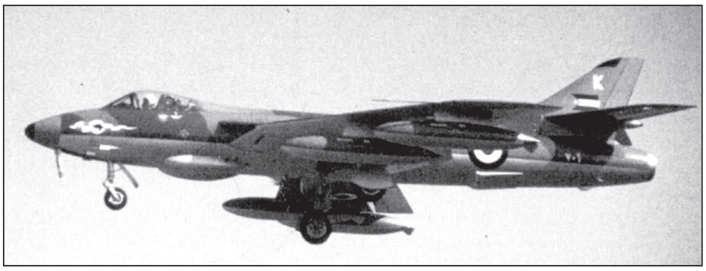
The Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 705/F of No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, in around 1966, before its upgrade in the UK. In the background is the Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 709/K. Both aircraft were destroyed on 5 June 1967. Of interest are the large red-painted surfaces of the nose and fin, as well as wingtips painted in white. The reason for this was the establishment of the UAC in 1964, which necessitated easy visual identification measures if different Arab air arms were to encounter each other in combat over Israel. It was for these reasons that the Iraqis, Lebanese and Syrians also painted large parts of the noses, fins and wingtips of their aircraft in red. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



King Hussein climbing out of the cockpit of an F-104A Starfighter. Jordan was granted permission to lease 32 F-104As and two F-104Bs, American aircraft leased to the Republic of China Air Force (Taiwan), in 1966. The type was originally planned to replace the Hunter as the principal interceptor of the RJAF. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

2nd Lieutenant Omeish. The aircraft hit the ground with such force that there were barely any recognisable pieces of aircraft wreckage or human remains.

The RJAF was beginning to seriously feel the impact of ever more vicious Israeli attacks on Syria. Initially, Jordanian Hunters remained uninvolved in this conflict, but two aircraft – flown by Ajlouni and Irsheid – flew a reconnaissance sortie over Syria, on 28 March 1965, to investigate the extent of damage caused by previous Israeli attacks on the construction site for the diversion of the River Banias. Syrian ground forces opened fire, but neither aircraft was hit. The Syrians 'returned the favour' in a much more provocative style – and on at least two occasions. On 13 September 1966, a single Syrian Ilyushin Il-28R reconnaissance bomber passed over Mafraq AB at low altitude; on 21 September, four MiG-17s repeated the exercise; and a pair of MiG-17 even attacked the dummy radar station nearby, for unknown reasons, on 16 October 1966.



The RJAF Hunter with serial number 809/K, in October 1965, while returning from overhaul and upgrade to F.Mk 73 standard. The aircraft was originally a F.Mk 6 and belonged to the second batch of Hunters delivered to Jordan in 1962 for operations by No. 2 Squadron before that unit was disbanded. Note that the nose – probably the fin too – was painted in red. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

Table 2: Officers of No.1 Squadron RJAF, 1 March 1966

Rank & Name	Function
Captain Nasri Jumean	OC Flying
Captain Jihard Irsheid	OC Squadron
Captain George Matta	Flight Commander
1st Lieutenant Ghazi Smadi	Flight Safety
1st Lieutenant Ihsan Shurdom	Stats & Finesse
1st Lieutenant Issam Jasser Zayyad	Photo Section
1st Lieutenant Muwaffaq Salti	
1st Lieutenant Samir Shorafa	Squadron Adjutant
2nd Lieutenant Farouk Abdeen	Coffee Bar & Fund
2nd Lieutenant Mohammed Shiyab	Garden
2nd Lieutenant Cristo Hanania	Intelligence and Navigation Section
2nd Lieutenant Hanna Najjar	Inventory and Squadron Diary

AIR BATTLE OF SAMU

Feeling threatened by Israel and Jordan (the latter because of alleged involvement in several coup attempts in Damascus), and trying to stay out of trouble, the Syrian government signed a mutual defence pact with Egypt on 4 November 1966. Surprisingly enough, this treaty achieved at least one, albeit temporary objective in so far as it deterred Israel from launching additional attacks on Syria. However, the IDF subsequently turned its attention on Jordan – the government of which was not only abstaining from launching or even supporting attacks on Israel, but was meanwhile secretly negotiating for peace, in return for which King Hussein received assurances that Israel would not attack.[42]

Because of tensions between Israel and Syria, all leave for personnel of No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, was cancelled and no flying over the West Bank was allowed from mid-August. The Israeli attack came three months later, nevertheless. On the early morning of 13 November, a brigade-sized force of IDF ground troops, supported by tanks, crossed the armistice lines into the West Bank and entered the villages of Samu, Kirbet el-Markas and Kirbet Jimba. The Israelis cleared most of the civilians out of their houses and began blowing up the buildings. When the 48th Infantry Battalion of the Jordanian Army attempted to intervene, it was ambushed by another Israeli force and beaten back with heavy losses. By 0945, the Israelis were back on their side of the armistice lines, leaving behind three

Jordanian civilians and 15 soldiers killed, and 41 people injured.[44] As the Israeli attack developed, the RJAF began scrambling Hunters from Mafraq AB, as recorded by No. 1 Squadron's Diary:

> It was a lovely morning and at 07.00 hours everybody was in the squadron on duty. Our OC Flying was giving a briefing when a phone call came through reporting heavy activity over Hebron area. All operational pilots were called and two minutes later it was 'Scramble': everybody rushed to the aircraft and eventually Salti and Shurdom got airborne, followed later by Zayyad and Abdeen. All other pilots were trying to find a serviceable aircraft to strap in. A few minutes later it was heard that Red Section had engaged. Blue Section was almost in the area, [and] they engaged also. Hearing that, a third pair was scrambled including Smadi and Shiyab. The fourth pair – Matta and Najjar – started up with empty outer tanks, but they were held at the marshalling points when all of a sudden Blue Section returned, followed shortly afterwards by Red 2 alone.

Issam Jasser Zayyad recalled an incident that slightly postponed the start for Red Section:

> When the signal to scramble came – a green Verey light was used – Ihsan launched but Muwaffaq's aircraft would not start. I had powered my engine already, so Muwaffaq jumped out of his cockpit, ran across the tarmac to my aircraft, got on the ladder, put his hand under my chin and asked to take over. I was not happy, but unstrapped and got out. Muwaffaq got in and they departed. Shurdom therefore took off as first and did one circuit before Muwaffaq joined him. I meanwhile went to another aircraft, powered up and got another green Verey, so immediately taxied out to the runway. Turning east abeam the tower, I saw another aircraft rolling in the same direction but did not know who it was; hoping it was someone junior in rank, I called for 'Blue 2' – and Farouq Abdeen answered.
>
> Matta and Najjar wanted to take off but their scramble was cancelled when Ajloun station detected a large number of Israeli aircraft over the combat zone. Thus, there were now four Hunters controlled by Ajloun radar station approaching the battle zone that was full of enemy aircraft. They were at low level and when underway that low they could not hear the ground control.

Red Section thus flew straight into a hornet's nest, as recalled by Ihsan Shurdom:

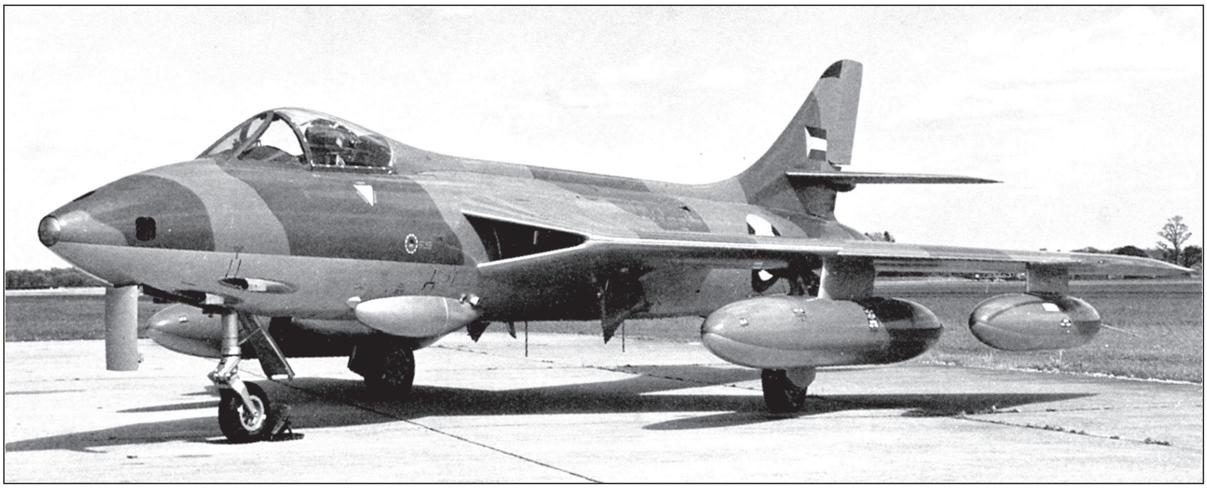
> Muwaffaq Salti and me were duty pilots, with Muwaffaq the pair leader. We were strapped in our aircraft ready to scramble from Mafraq AB immediately, should the need arise. Jasser Zayyad was in the third Hunter acting as spare; and Nasri Jumean was in the fourth Hunter. George Matta and Hanna Najjar manned the third pair of Hunters, but they were never ordered into the air. Muwaffaq was actually not scheduled to fly that morning. However, shortly before the order to take-off came, Nasri was told that the C-in-C RJAF – Colonel Saleh Kurdi – wanted him on the phone. He had to leave the aircraft and Muwaffaq took his place … for unrelated reasons, Kurdi did not want Nasri to fly but ordered him to control from the ground instead.
>
> Captain Firas Ajlouni and 1st Lieutenant Zohair Thabsum served as controllers at Ajloun that morning. Their radar detected the Israeli aircraft quite early and they reported accordingly to Kurdi in the HQ, but he replied that these must be clouds. Firas called Kurdi three more times, but every time received a reply that there was no information about Israeli activity over the West Bank. It was only once Prime Minister Wasfi Tell reported that Jordan was under attack that the RJAF went into action.
>
> My plane was Hunter F.Mk 6 serialnumber N/712 … we were given vector to the Samu area and headed in that direction at low level in order to avoid Israeli radar. On reaching the battle area I saw four Mirages turning into us from the four o'clock position, at which point I shouted with excitement, 'There they are!' Then the combat discipline took over and I continued reporting, 'Four bogies, four o'clock, slightly high, closing in.' There was no answer from Red Leader but I saw his flaps coming to take-off position and I think that he either saw the Israelis or heard me, but I was not receiving any radio traffic from him.
>
> The Mirages kept closing in and I kept reporting their position to Muwaffaq until I saw them approaching the firing distance. I reported, 'Red Leader, they are in firing position. I have to break right!' I broke right and after that I did not see or hear Red Leader.
>
> After breaking right and until my exit from the combat zone, I was in constant combat with Israeli Mirages, either evading an attack or trying to get my gunsight on one of them. It was like towing an aerial target at the aerial firing range, as every time I looked back there was a Mirage on the perch position, turning to dive in.
>
> I was turning hard left at one time when Jasser Zayyad, the leader of Blue Section that was scrambled after us, called, 'Hunter turning left, there is a Mirage behind you!' I answered, 'Contact, help if you can.' But he could not because of other Mirages. The Mirage fired what I thought was a Matra R.530 at me but I was flying very low and turning very hard and it missed me and hit the ground.
>
> During the battle, I managed to fire three bursts at a Mirage that I managed to follow. The Mirage was at long range and I twisted my throttle grip to maximum to give maximum current to steady the gunsight. I turned left, cleared my tail and as my fuel was running low I took an opportunity to break off combat and headed east at a very low level.

Zayyad added:

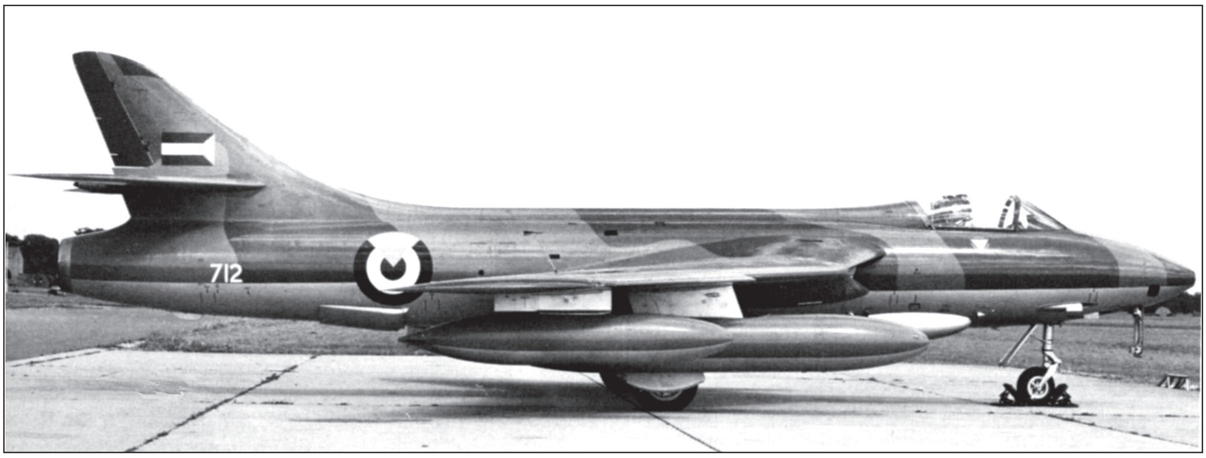
> When the first pair arrived on the scene, Ihsan was heard to say, 'Oh my God, plenty of aircraft!' on the radio. Muwaffaq told Ihsan to return to base, engaged two Mirages and was then caught by another pair of Mirages approaching from the south. These were four Mirages that came in a 'double attack system' – about which the RJAF pilots did not know at the time: it was quite a new development from US pilots.

Ihsan recalled that the Israelis fired at least one missile right at the start of the battle. This was the first time the Israelis had ever fired Matra R.530 missiles in combat. Ihsan broke and he and Muwaffaq lost sight of each other. Muwaffaq scissored with an Israeli that came at Ihsan's line astern. Ihsan then tried to warn Muwaffaq that an Israeli fighter was tailing him, but lost the radio link and then Muwaffaq's aircraft disappeared out of sight in the direction of the Dead Sea.

While manoeuvring to avoid multiple attacks by Israeli fighters, Ihsan lost count of his enemies: during the entire battle, he saw at least between four and eight aircraft over the area between Falluja and Beersheba – so many Israelis were airborne. He engaged and fired at one, and then another Israeli fired a Matra R.530 missile at him – but this hit the ground because he was flying so low.



Pre-delivery photograph of the Hunter F.Mk 6 N/712, flown by Ihsan Shurdom in air combat over Samu on 13 November 1966. At the time this photograph was taken, the aircraft was equipped with a nose containing reconnaissance cameras, which was not installed at the time of the combat. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



Right-hand view of the same Hunter in the UK before delivery. Note the larger, 230-gal (1,046-litre) drop tanks (made of steel), installed on inboard underwing hardpoints, made available to the RJAF in 1966. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

Eventually, Ihsan got low on fuel and headed in [the] direction of Wadi Mujib.[45]

Shurdom continued:

Just before I crossed the shore of the Dead Sea, I saw two Mirages pulling up and turning west and I also noticed smoke at the shore in place called Ain al-Fashkha. After that I headed through Wadi Mujib [sometimes called the 'Grand Canyon of Jordan'] and returned to Mafraq from there. My total time in the air was 30 minutes, which indicates a long time in jet fighter combat considering the short flight time from Mafraq to Samu.

Zayyad concluded his recollection:

Upon the take-off of our pair, I changed to the frequency of the Ajloun radar station and they gave us the heading in a good, calm voice. We remained at low level while approaching the combat zone. West of Khirbet Samra, I asked Farouq to raise his gunsight and fire to make sure his guns were working. The ground station then called us to say there were no contacts nearby and we could climb. Thinking, 'if our radars cannot see us, then hopefully the Israelis cannot either', I replied, 'Negative, tell me the targets.'

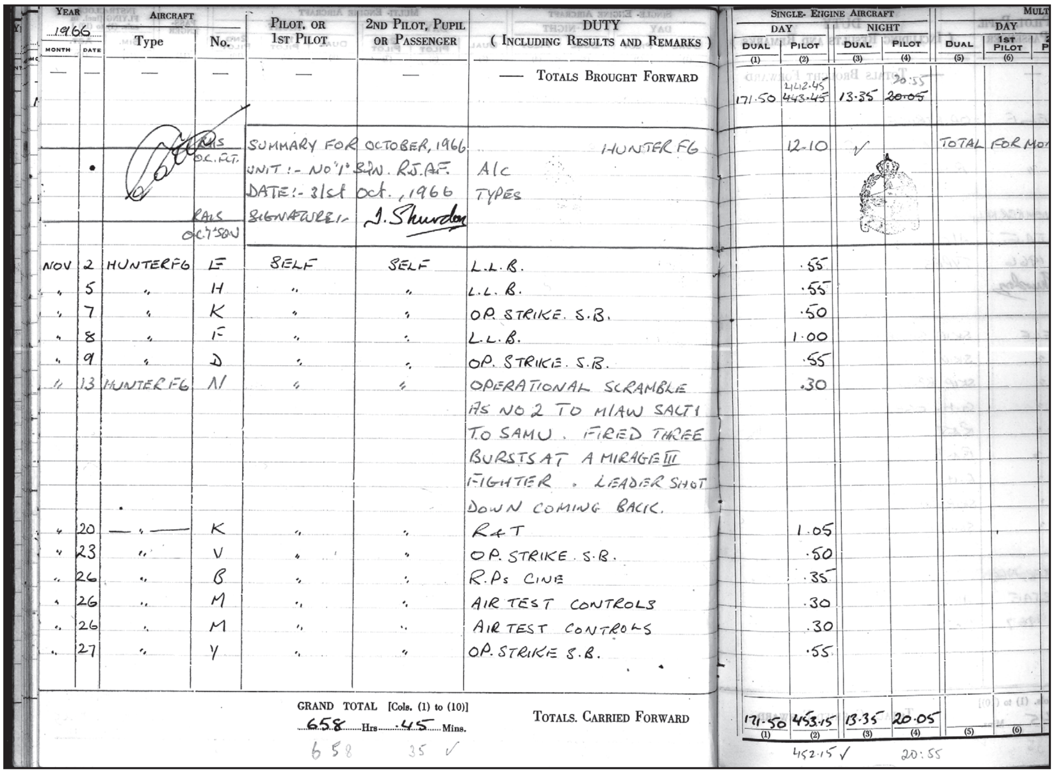
Minutes later, I saw four aircraft in combat formation heading north and one aircraft turning left with a Mirage closing in on him. Then I saw another Hunter. Concerned with the aircraft that was turning with the Mirage, I called on the radio, 'Red 2, are you turning left?' – and received an affirmative reply. I told him to keep turning left as there was a Mirage behind. Ihsan replied, 'Can you help me?' I pulled up and said, 'I cannot help you because of the other four!' Then I saw a white puff coming out of the Mirage and said, 'Red 2, break left, break left!' I felt a huge lump in my throat as I thought that Ihsan would be killed, but the missile missed, hit the ground and exploded in a vineyard.

I was now climbing from 2,000 to 3,000ft [610-914m], when the four Israelis above sighted me, turned and dived. I took a look back at my wingman and noticed that Farouq was getting out of position. I ordered, 'Stay with me!' and Farouq answered, 'What to hell are you doing?'

As I turned my attention to the Israelis diving from above, I saw the Mirage approaching to 800 yards [732m] and opening fire, then flashing by while still firing, and thus I ordered to Farouq, 'Blue 2, watch him!' I meanwhile engaged the leader who lit his afterburner shortly before I opened fire. Then I heard Muwaffaq calling, 'Hunter behind Mirage: break, break!' Because I could not see Farouq, I called, 'Blue 2, where are you?' Farouq answered, 'I'm behind you.'

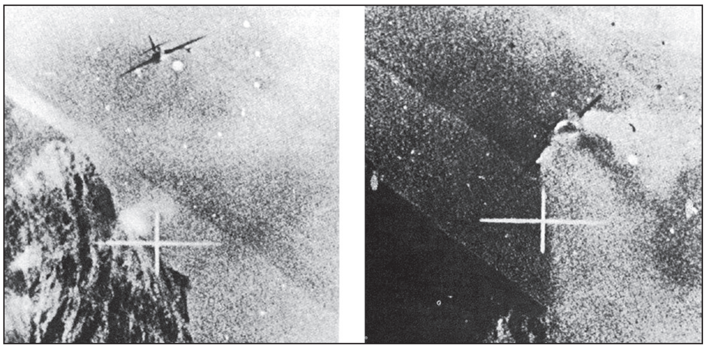
Drop tanks from further Israeli fighters were falling down all around us as we began talking to each other. Muwaffaq said, 'Sky is full of Mirages, let's get out of here!' I sighted Muwaffaq and Ihsan behind him, and heard Red Leader announcing he would be crossing over the Dead Sea. Thus I led Farouq down to the deck. While diving, we opened our formation to provide mutual cover for each other. Then I heard Ihsan say, 'There are Mirages over Jericho!', and the ground control called, 'Can you raise Red Section?' I tried twice, but did not get a reply.

I exited the combat zone east of Jericho, via Salt, along the Naour Valley. While passing by, I saw a broadcasting station, antennae and the local university. Once over Mafraq, I saw only one aircraft on the downwind side and thus called Ihsan, 'Red



YEAR 1966		AIRCRAFT		PILOT, OR 1ST PILOT	2ND PILOT, PUPIL OR PASSENGER	DUTY (INCLUDING RESULTS AND REMARKS)	SINGLE-ENGINE AIRCRAFT				MULT	
MONTH	DATE	Type	No.				DAY		NIGHT		DAY	
							DUAL (1)	PILOT (2)	DUAL (3)	PILOT (4)	DUAL (5)	1ST PILOT (6)
—	—	—	—	—	—	— TOTALS BROUGHT FORWARD	171.50	442.45 443.45	13.35	20:55 ~~20.05~~		
		RAIS O.C. FLT.		SUMMARY FOR OCTOBER, 1966 UNIT:- NO '1' SQN. RJ.AF. DATE:- 31st Oct., 1966		A/C TYPES HUNTER F6		12-10	✓		TOTAL FOR MO	
		RAIS OC.1'SQN		SIGNATURE:-	I. Shurdom							
NOV	2	HUNTER F6	E	SELF	SELF	L.L.B.		·55				
”	5	”	H	”	”	L.L.B.		·55				
”	7	”	K	”	”	OP. STRIKE. S.B.		·50				
”	8	”	F	”	”	L.L.B.		1·00				
”	9	”	D	”	”	OP. STRIKE. S.B.		·55				
”	13	HUNTER F6	N	”	”	OPERATIONAL SCRAMBLE AS NO 2 TO M/AW SALTI TO SAMU. FIRED THREE BURSTS AT A MIRAGE III FIGHTER. LEADER SHOT DOWN COMING BACK.		·30				
”	20	— ” —	K	”	”	R & T		1.05				
”	23	”	V	”	”	OP. STRIKE. S.B.		·50				
”	26	”	B	”	”	R.Ps CINE		·35				
”	26	”	M	”	”	AIR TEST CONTROLS		·30				
”	26	”	M	”	”	AIR TEST CONTROLS		.30				
”	27	”	Y	”	”	OP. STRIKE S.B.		·55				
				GRAND TOTAL [Cols. (1) to (10)] 658 Hrs 45 Mins. 658 35 ✓		TOTALS. CARRIED FORWARD	171.50 (1)	453.15 (2) 452.15 ✓	13.35 (3)	20.05 (4) 20:55	(5)	(6)

A scan from the pilot logbook of Ihsan Shurdom, documenting his mission in the Hunter F.Mk 6 E/712 on 13 November 1966. (Ihsan Shurdom)



Two stills from an Israeli gun-camera film showing the moment Muwafaq Salti's Hunter was hit by an Israeli Mirage. (IDF)

2: where is your leader?' – but got no reply. I thought maybe Muwaffaq had hit the ground or landed in Amman, but never thought he had been shot down. Ihsan landed first, followed by me and Farouq.

Shurdom recalled what happened after his landing:

> Muwaffaq had not returned and I told the squadron commander about the puff of smoke I had noticed: that was where they later found his body. King Hussein arrived [at] the squadron soon after and I showed him my gun camera film, showing firing at the Mirage. I described [to] him how I gave maximum current to the gunsight as we were taught by Captain Nasri Jumean, our fighter instructor pilot, who was also present.
>
> I strongly believe that Muwaffaq, in his haste to take off, forgot to attach his leg straps when he changed airplane and as a result died on ejecting from his aircraft because of the forces on his legs and pelvis. I also do not think that he was shot down in a dogfight as he was a superb slow-speed and low-level combat pilot. We saw the Israeli gun film, later on, and his aircraft was in a gentle turn to the left when it was fired upon, so possibly he was unaware there was somebody behind him.

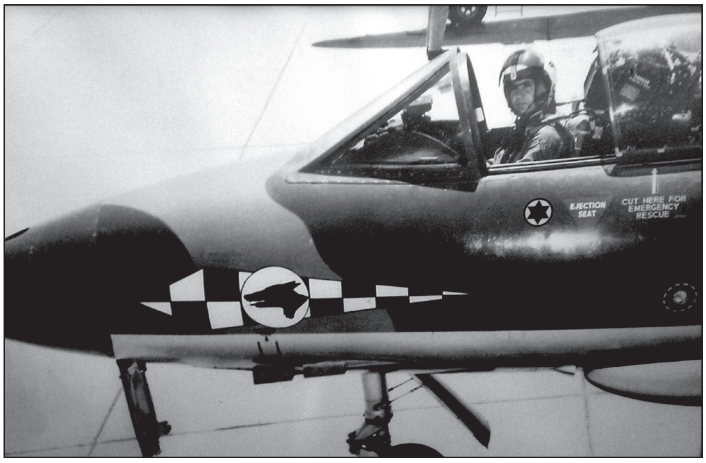
Ihsan Shurdom was debriefed for hours. From his, Yasser's and Farouq's debriefs, the RJAF concluded that the combat involved four Mirages for each of the Hunters, as recalled by Farouk Abdeen, who claimed two and was credited with downing one opponent:

> The estimated number of Mirages that attacked our Hunters was between 14 and 16. Four Mirages engaged Salti alone; Blue Section engaged a Finger Four formation of Mirages, and there were other Mirages scattered in the sky, fighting as singles and twos.
>
> One of the tangible facts is that none of the RJAF pilots was shot down in the battle area: Salti was chased by a pair of previously unseen Mirage IIIs and shot down while climbing over a small hill near the Dead Sea. In comparison, we shot down two Mirages during the combat: Muwaffaq had shot down one before he went down, and I shot down the other. This result speaks for itself, nicely showing the proficiency of the Jordanian pilots.[46]

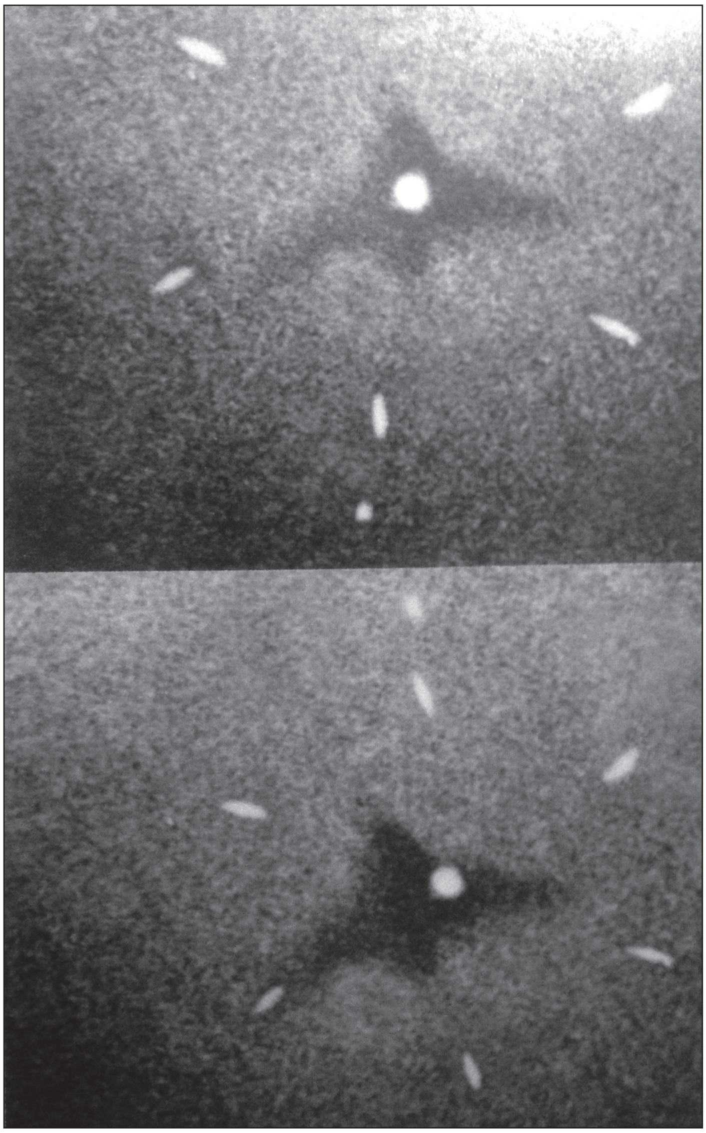
Yasser Jumean claimed one kill too, and Ihsan claimed a 'probable damaged'. The RJAF later learned that one Israeli fighter force-landed on fire near Acre (the source was a UN person who spoke to a Jordanian representative in Jerusalem, not long after the battle). This claim was credited to Abdeen, who reported to have hit his opponent in the left wing with a two-second burst. Another Israeli fighter may have been damaged but landed safely, while a third may have made an emergency landing short of the runway after running out of fuel. However, the Israelis deny suffering any losses, and instead emphasise that Muwaffaq Salti was shot down after an 'eight-minute long pursuit through a desert canyon', when he supposedly ejected 'into the side of that canyon'.[47]

When the RJAF realised that Salti was missing, a search and rescue operation was mounted. Marwan Nooreddin flew an Aérospatiale SE.316B Alouette III helicopter, together with Zeid Toukan. They returned without success. During the second sortie, Nooreddin flew with Isam Malhas as co-pilot (Malhas was also a graduate of RAF Cranwell, like Salti), and they found Salti's body – together

1st Lieutenant Muwaffaq Salti, killed at the end of the air battle over Samu on 13 November 1966. He was buried in the Royal Cemetery, around 0900 on 14 November 1966. In 2007, the wreckage of his aircraft was found by Israeli archaeologists, as the Dead Sea had retreated. The wreckage was inside the territory assigned to Israel/Palestine by the UN in 1948. (Patricia Salti Collection)



Flight Lieutenant Farouq Abdeen in the cockpit of the Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 706/G he flew on 13 November 1966, proudly showing a kill marking for an Israeli Mirage he claimed shot down during the air battle over Samu. (Farouq Abdeen Collection)



Two gun-camera stills from the film shot by Flight Lieutenant Farouk Abdeen on 13 November 1966, showing his pipper right at one of two Israeli Mirages at which he fired that day. Abdeen was credited for a confirmed kill, while the Israelis denied any losses. (Farouk Abdeen Collection)

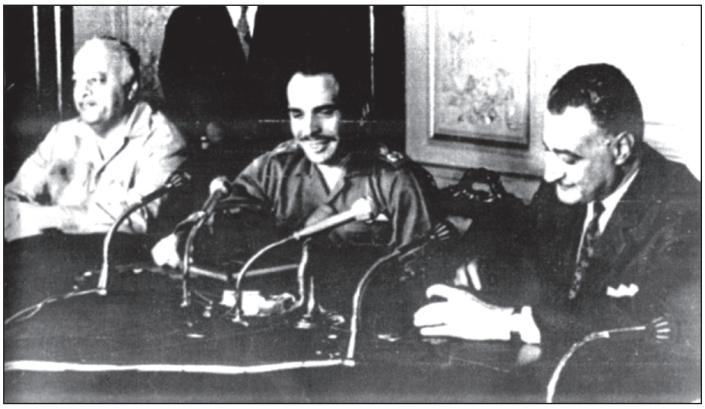
with his parachute right next to him – close to the 1948 armistice line, not in the north of the Yarmuk Canyon, as often reported. Salti's straps on his ejection seat were not properly adjusted for him before he scrambled, and his parachute had no chance to deploy because of the angle at which he ejected while passing low over the hills surrounding the Dead Sea.

Naturally, the Samu raid ruined Israeli-Jordanian relations. Already antagonised by all the other Arab governments, King Hussein now found his country on the receiving end of unprovoked Israeli aggression and himself facing a near-mutiny from within his military, which – considering itself the finest in the Arab world – felt humiliated by the Israeli attack. Convinced that the Israeli provocation was designed to set off a Jordanian retaliatory action that could be used as a pretext for an Israeli invasion of the West Bank, and understanding that his military was in no position to face the IDF on its own, King Hussein decided not to react.[48] Nevertheless, the two countries were soon on a direct collision course.

5

JUNE 1967 WAR

Determined to rescue a friendly government in Damascus, from late 1966 the Soviet government began issuing warnings to the government in Cairo about supposed concentrations of Israeli troops on the armistice lines with Syria. Despite very serious efforts, Egyptian military intelligence could not obtain any kind of confirmation for such information, but President Gamal Abd el-Nasser of Egypt trusted the Soviets more than his own officers. Archival evidence – mainly a secret report by Leonid Brezhnev, then the Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) for the plentary session of the Central Committee of the CPSU on 20 June 1967, obtained from Polish archives – shows that Moscow had no desire to encourage a war against Israel and only attempted to avert the danger of a potential Israeli attack on Syria, which was already under severe pressure. Brezhnev and his aides mistakenly estimated that Israel was militarily weak and could not cope with a war on two fronts. Hoping to manipulate Nasser into assisting Syria through concentrating Egyptian armed forces on the armistice line with Israel, they suggested that the Egyptians further eject United Nations (UN) peacekeeping forces from Sinai, mobilise their own military and deploy it in the Sinai. Nasser followed this advice. However, the Soviet leaders then made another mistake by gravely miscalculating their abilities to control the Arab governments: from that point onwards, Moscow lost control of the emerging crisis. Without intending to attack Israel, but in order to increase political pressure upon his enemy, President Nasser then announced a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba – without consulting the Soviets. All the time fully aware of its superiority over the combined militaries of Egypt, Iraq, Jordan and Syria, and without ever testing Egyptian resolve to maintain a blockade of the Gulf of Aqaba - yet further alarmed by overflights of UARAF MiG-21F-13s over southern Israel – the Israeli military then set its forces into motion. After forcing their reluctant government to vote in favour of war, Israeli generals launched a swift and devastating attack on Egypt on the morning of 5 June 1967.[49]



King Hussein and President Nasser signing the Egyptian-Jordanian Mutual Defence Treaty in Cairo on 30 May 1967.

Following the signing of the Egyptian-Jordanian Mutual Defence Treaty, Lieutenant General Abdul al-Moneim Riyadh was reappointed as commander of the Eastern Front UAC on 30 May 1967, and was provided with an HQ in Amman. At his disposal were primarily Jordanian military assets, but Egyptian, Iraqi, Saudi and Syrian units were expected to arrive in the following days. (via M. T.)

Brigadier General Mustafa Shalabi el-Hinnawy (first from left) was appointed Head of Air Operations UAC on 30 May, and sent to tour allied Syrian, Iraqi and Jordanian forces the next day. (Shalabi el-Hinnawy)

Convinced that Jordan would become a primary target in the coming war, the government in Amman was hesitant to get involved in this affair. Their military was relatively small and possessed inadequate resources to cover the long ceasefire line with Israel. It also faced immense political and topographical difficulties. The loss of central Palestine – i.e. the West Bank – to Israel in the 1948-1949 War, the raid on Samu and fierce Egyptian and Syrian propaganda against King Hussein had resulted in a situation where the Jordanian military could not afford to leave a single square metre of the West Bank unprotected. Therefore, the Army was mobilised and deployed in a very visible fashion, yet without the necessary depth. Jordanian war plans remained purely defensive in nature. It was only on 28 May that King Hussein attempted to improve the vulnerable position of his country through opening negotiations with Cairo over a mutual defence treaty. An agreement was signed on 30 May, and resulted in the Jordanian military being put under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the reactivated UAC, Egyptian Lieutenant General Abd el-Moneim Riyad. Correspondingly, the RJAF came under the control of Brigadier General Mustafa Shalabi

Lieutenant General Abdul al-Moneim Riyadh (fourth from left) and Brigadier General Shalabi el-Hinnawy (fifth from left) touring Syrian positions on the Golan Heights, on 2 June 1967. (Shalabi el-Hinnawy)

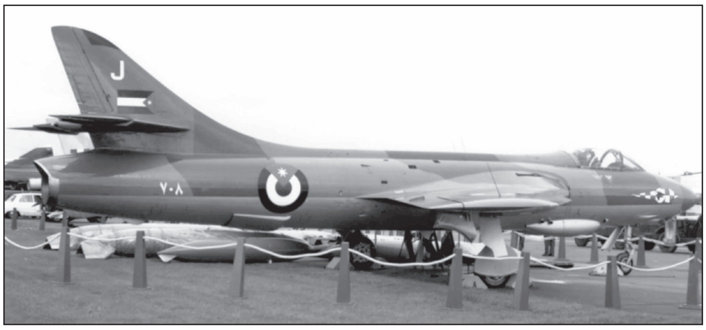
el-Hinnawy, Head of Air Operations of the UAC, who arrived in Amman together with Riyad on 1 June 1967, to set up their HQs there. Furthermore, King Hussein agreed to the entry into Jordan of Egyptian Army commandos as well as significant contingents of troops from Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia.[50]

RUSH HOUR AT MAFRAQ

Even after the reactivation of the UAC, Jordanian war plans remained purely defensive in nature. The RJAF was mobilised and put on alert, but it could not have been caught in a more precarious situation. Not only was it the smallest of the four Arab air forces facing Israel, but practically all of its combat assets were concentrated at Mafraq AB, closer to Israel than those of any other Arab air force. Although theoretically outfitted with 23 Hunters, No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, had only 19 of these available and 18 operational as of 4 June 1967, because at least two were still undergoing overhauls and modifications in the UK. Worse still, the majority of Jordan's fast-jet pilots were still on conversion courses for the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter in the US. Five of these fighters had arrived only weeks before, together with a US Air Force team that was to supervise the training of Jordanian pilots and ground personnel.[51] One of the RJAF pilots in the process of conversion to the Starfighter, Jasser Zayyad, recalled:

> I was in the cockpit of an F-104, in Texas, when the signal came to cut engines: we were all recalled to Amman and were to leave within seven hours. With me were Jasser, Nasri, Jihad and Samir. We arrived in Amman on 3 June, but without flying gear and having not flown Hunters for six months. The Egyptian commander [Lieutenant General Riyadh] gave us 24 hours of leave. I went to Jerusalem the following day and then on to my village, but was back to Mafraq on 4 June. I feared the outcome of the war that was looming, but was eager to see action. My grandfather, who was hard of hearing, caught me by the hand and showed me where the Israelis had been for the last 20 years. He said I should be shot in the front of the head, between the eyes, not in the back. That meant: 'Jasser, do your duty!'

According to King Hussein, once he realised that the war with Israel was approaching, and because his own pilots had not yet completed their training on the type, he requested that the Americans evacuate the remaining Starfighters. Hussein explained that the F-104s were insured with a Lebanese-Swiss company, but that the insurance did not cover war risks, and that they were therefore of little value in the case of conflict.[52] Therefore, on the morning of 4 June, US instructors flew the Starfighters to Turkey and all associated US personnel were evacuated with the help of Lockheed C-130 Hercules transports of the USAF. This was around the same time that the second group of RJAF pilots who were undergoing training on the type returned to Jordan from the US.[53] Zayyad explained:



The RJAF Hunter with serial number 708/J in Great Britain, shortly after its overhaul and upgrade to F.Mk 73 standard. The aircraft was back in Jordan by the time of the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

> I got up early that day and arrived at the squadron at around 0640. Everyone was in flying gear - except the four of us that returned from the US. Therefore, I decided to read the aircraft manual for the Hunter, to refresh my training. Then we received a briefing from Major Firas Ajlouni, who had already flown along the Jordan Valley and said everything looked quiet … The Americans flew out four F-104s followed by C-130s, between 0930 and 1000.

The RJAF was thus left not only without any supersonic fighters, but also with only 14 qualified pilots for its fighter jets. In order to bolster this diminutive force, the C-in-C RJAF, Brigadier General Ibrahim Othman, issued a request via official channels for the two Pakistani Air Force instructors who served with No. 1 Squadron, Flight Lieutenant Saif-ul-Azam and Flight Lieutenant Sarwar Shad, to be 'recruited' by his force. An appropriate permission was eventually granted, and the two Pakistanis were thus to fly with the RJAF during the war. However, by the morning of 5 June, Shad was hospitalised: in fact, he did not fly a single sortie during the following week.[54]

Despite increasing tensions and all the movements described above, Nasri Jumean recalled that no other measures were undertaken to improve the situation at Mafraq AB:

> Although plenty of AAA [anti-aircraft artillery] was deployed, no arrangements or plans had been made for a war. Very few trenches, no sandbags, no protection for the aircraft, nothing.

As of the morning of 5 June, the RJAF was organised as listed in Table 3 on the next page.

UNCERTAINTY IN BAGHDAD

During the meeting between Nasser and King Hussein in Cairo, on 30 May, the two rulers made a telephone call to President ar-Rahman Arif in Baghdad with a request for the Iraqi armed forces to start deploying to Jordan in coordination with General Riyadh. President Arif agreed to deploy one armoured division and three squadrons of fighter-bombers 'immediately'.[55] The Iraqis were carefully monitoring the escalation between Egypt and Israel, and specific units were put on alert for a possible deployment to Jordan as early as 24 March. On 17 May, the then C-in-C IrAF, Brigadier General Jassam Muhammad ash-Shaher, put his Nos 6 and 17 Squadrons on alert for deployment to Jordan. However, as described above, King Hussein initially attempted to keep Jordan out of the trouble. Therefore, it was only on 1 and 2 June that the Iraqis began to move their units across 621 miles (1,000km) of desert from Baghdad to Amman, and then in great urgency. As of that time, ash-Shaher had the flying units of the Iraqi Air Force available (see Table 4 on the next page).

All of No. 6 Squadron's Hunters, as well as two Hunters from No. 29 Squadron, IrAF, were transferred from Habbaniyah to the airfield known as 'H-3+', in western Iraq, during the afternoon of 31 May. Their pilots found the local conditions and installations to be rather poor, as one of them recalled:

> Although originally constructed during the 1930s, to serve a major pumping station on the H-pipeline, connecting central Iraq with the port of Haifa, and although considered for considerable expansion by the British and Americans in the late 1950s, and despite various plans developed at the time the UAC originally came into being in 1964, as of 1967, H-3 was still a relatively small airfield, with only one metalled runway, a small fuel depot and a bare minimum of other installations. As such, it rather suited the purpose of transit airfield than an outright 'air base' that could support sustained combat operations. All personnel had to sleep in tents distributed around their aircraft. We did not think this a critical problem, however: we expected to soon redeploy to Mafraq AB in Jordan, where an advanced party of IrAF ground personnel was to arrive on 5 June 1967.[57]

In expectation of the Hunters moving to Jordan, on 5 June the IrAF ordered the MiG-21FL interceptors of its newly established No. 17 Squadron to H-3. Furthermore, Captain Farouk al-Tail, the newly appointed CO No. 10 Squadron, and Major Jassam al-Jabouri, CO No. 7 Squadron that flew MiG-17s, received an order to keep their units ready for action. The Iraqi Army managed to deploy one AAA regiment equipped with 100mm guns of Soviet origin at H-3, though the place obviously lacked effective low-altitude protection.

Major General Jassam Muhammad ash-Shaher, C-in-C IrAF from 22 September 1966 until 17 July 1968. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

Meanwhile, on 3 June, an IrAF lieutenant colonel arrived in Amman, where he was to serve as liaison officer to General Riyadh's HQ and facilitate joint operations with the RJAF and SyAAF, as well as the UARAF. To his considerable surprise, once there, the officer in question was informed that Egypt had decided not to be the side to initiate hostilities, and that the Arabs would wait for the first Israeli strike.[58] Unaware of the fact that they had to wait for a signal from Lieutenant General Riyadh and Brigadier General el-

Table 3: RJAF Order of Battle, 5 June 1967

Unit	Base	Equipment	Remarks
HQ Amman			
Commander of the RJAF Major Saleh Kurdi			
The Royal Flight	Amman IAP	Dove, Riley Dove, Herald, Heron, Viking, Alouette III	CO unknown; established 15 April 1950
No. 1 Squadron	Mafraq	19 Hunter F.Mk 6	CO Major Firass Ajlouni; unit slated to re-equip with F-104; 18 Hunters operational
No. 2 Squadron			Slated for reactivation and equipment with Hunters once F-104s would be operational; Vampires stored at Mafraq in 1962 but apparently no longer present
No. 3 Squadron	Amman IAP	Dove, Riley Dove, Herald, Heron, Viking, Ambassador, C-47, Whirlwind, Alouette	CO unknown; originally established as No. 2 Squadron mid-1950s, redesignated as No. 3 Squadron 1959; operating miscellaneous transports and helicopters
No. 4 Training Squadron	Mafraq	Chipmunk	Unit established 1960 with Chipmunks but deactivated at an unknown date
No. 9 Squadron			Originally planned to operate Hunters after No. 1 Squadron became operational on F-104s; established and activated only in 1969

Hinnawy to go into action, on 4 June the IrAF pilots at H-3 received a briefing on their targets for the first day of the war, Israeli airfields at Lod and Kfar Sirkin, as one of them recalled:

> Our Intelligence informed us that we were to take part in Operation Rashid, and that we would attack Israeli air bases in cooperation with Jordanians and Syrians, while Egyptian troops would march into the Negev Desert … Only later did we learn that this plan actually envisaged that the Israelis would open the war but get mauled while attacking Egyptian air bases, and that we were actually to take part in a counteroffensive.
>
> The target information we received was unusually poor. All the maps and intelligence on Israeli airfields were based on information from the times before 1948! They told us to expect Mirages in the air and US-made SAMs on the ground and therefore we needed to approach at low level to avoid being detected by Israeli radars.

Ultimately, as of 5 June the reinforced IrAF Hunter squadron was still at H-3, and therefore - except for ground-based AAA - the 16 pilots and 19 Hunters of No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, at Mafraq represented the sole force that could effectively protect Jordanian airspace.

MISSED OPPORTUNITY: MORNING OF 5 JUNE 1967

No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, was among the first Jordanian military units to be alerted for action, at 0500 on the morning of 5 June, and its pilots expected to take off as soon as the news came that the war had started. Between 0600 and 0630, Major Firas Ajlouni, reappointed CO No. 1 Squadron on 31 December 1966, gathered his pilots for a briefing, instructing seven of them to prepare for air defence sorties, while he was to lead the others in an attack on Israeli airfields. Nasri Jumean recalled what was happening that morning:

> Firas was not happy because of previous incidents [not only involving Israel but also in the US] that had taken place, which had affected him. But he was happy to see me: we had not flown Hunters for six months and Firas arranged some training sessions and a few flights. Between 0900 and 0930, Khaled Mohammed Ali [CO Mafraq AB] called for a meeting with Firas and me. We decided to divide the pilots into two groups. Firas was assigned to north Operational Readiness Plan (ORP) on runway 13 and

Table 4: IrAF Order of Battle, 5 June 1967[56]

Unit	Base	Equipment	Remarks
HQ Baghdad C-in-C Major General Jassam Muhammad ash-Shaher			
No. 1 Squadron	Al-Hurriyah (Kirkuk)	20 Fury FB.Mk 1	CO unknown
No. 2 Squadron	Firnas (Mosul)	4 Mi-1, 9 Mi-4	CO unknown
No. 3 Squadron	Rashid (Baghdad)	2 Dove, 2 Heron	CO unknown
No. 4 Squadron	Rashid	11 Wessex HC.Mk 2	CO Lieutenant Colonel Hassan Sharif; unit deactivated 1962 but re-established 1965 as a helicopter squadron
No. 5 Squadron			Unit deactivated December 1963
No. 6 Squadron	Habbaniyah	10 Hunter F.Mk 59A/B	CO Lieutenant Colonel Adil Suleimany; two additional Hunters damaged in collision over Habbaniyah in late May 1967 and not repaired by 5 June 1967
No. 7 Squadron	Al-Hurriyah	20 MiG-17F and MiG-17PF	CO Lieutenant Colonel Masroor Bahaedin
No. 8 Squadron	Al-Hurriyah	11 Il-28, 2 Il-28U	CO Lieutenant Colonel Mehdi Mahsun as-Sabbah; unit redeployed to Firnas 25 August 1967
No. 9 Squadron		MiG-21PFM	In the process of being reestablished
No. 10 Squadron	Habbaniyah	9 Tu-16	CO Captain Farouk al-Tail
No. 11 Squadron	Rashid	11 MiG-21F-13	CO Lieutenant Colonel Hashem Manhal al-Azawi
No. 14 Squadron		8-9 MiG-21PFM	In the process of being established
No. 17 Squadron	Rashid	8-9 MiG-21FL	Acting as OCU for crews of Nos 9 and 14 Squadrons
No. 23 Squadron	Rashid	8 An-2, 6 An-12BP	CO unknown
No. 29 Squadron		12 Hunter F.Mk 59A/B	CO Lieutenant Colonel Ismail Wakti
Hunter OCU	Habbaniyah	9 Hunter F.Mk 59 and T.Mk 66	CO 'Captain Crow' (British pilot; real name unknown)
Air Force Academy	Wahda (Shoibiyah)	Chipmunk, Jet Provost, MiG-15UTI	CO unknown

President Abdel ar-Rahman Arif (here on an official photograph with his wife) was swift to order deployments of significant contingents of the Iraqi Army and Air Force to Jordan in late May and early June 1967. Unknown to him (and the Jordanians and Iraqis at large) was the fact that the call from Amman came far too late. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

Lieutenant General Riyadh (centre, with back to camera) and Brigadier General Hinnawy (with sunglasses) visiting Rashid AB in Iraq, on 1 June 1967, to meet the CO No. 11 Squadron, IrAF, Lieutenant Colonel Hashem Manhal al-Azawi. In the background are three MiG-21F-13s of the Iraqi unit, including the aircraft with serial number 530. (Shalabi el-Hinnawy)

Later the same day, Riyadh and Hinnawy visited Habbaniya AB, where they inspected No. 6 and No. 29 Squadrons, IrAF. They are shown monitoring the take-off of three Iraqi Hunters. (Shalabi el-Hinnawy)

> me to the south ORP. Firas was to lead the strike section and me the fighter escort. He was to fly in formation with Mohammed Shiab, Ghazi Smadi and Jihad Irsheid, but the latter went sick. I was to fly with Farouq el-Abdeen, Wasfi Amari, Saif-ul-Azam, Ihsan Shurdom and Hanna Najjar. George Matta was to act as a link between the base commanders and fighter pilots.

Jasser Zayyad was still in need of a flying overall, helmet and a g-suit (anti-gravity suit for pilots). He recalled:

> Firas told us that our task would be to provide cover for the Iraqi Army that would deploy inside Jordan. Then I saw Awni and made him strip so I could use his overall and helmet. That left Awni crying with frustration.

The orders issued by Ajlouni were unusual: until just a few days before the war, the RJAF had planned to raid Israeli airfields at the onset of any kind of hostilities with Israel. However, since King Hussein had signed the treaty with Nasser, the Egyptians reserved the right to order such attacks for themselves. The Jordanians thus concluded that they were expected to fly air defence and only minor attacks on targets inside Israel. Otherwise, they were to wait to link up with the Iraqis and then the Syrians. Ihsan Shurdom summed up the state of mind of the RJAF Hunter pilots:

> Our air force was small but good. We knew that we would have to take on the Israelis and we had great respect for them. In the event of war we planned to bomb six or seven key Israeli airfields, but when the war approached, the Egyptians told us we would not be required. They would knock out the airfields and we would have a minor air defence role … But I knew that in those days MiGs could only fly as far as you could spit.[59]

Jumean continued, revealing the strikingly poor targeting information Jordanians had received:

> The briefing went on and Ali was asked about the armament. He said guns only, while Firas said guns and rockets. Asked if the rockets were ready - as they needed to be fitted to the aircraft - Ali said, ‘No problem, it will be fixed.’ Some 20 minutes later, Ali said to Nasri that their formation should be ready to attack Netanya. Nasri asked what they should look for, but was told just to look for ‘anything’ and fire at it.

While the briefing was going on, two Hunters had been held on the CAP station between Mafraq AB and Israel. George Matta and Ghazi Smadi flew the first pair, that launched around 0600. They were then replaced by Nasri Jumean and Farouq el-Abdeen. When Jihad Irsheid became sick, he was sent to the control tower, and replaced by Matta, who flew his second CAP together with another pilot. However, as no orders for an attack against Israel came, most of the No. 1 Squadron pilots had to wait in frustration. The only news they received later during the morning was to expect an Iraqi MiG-21 squadron to arrive in Mafraq during the early afternoon.

Meanwhile, the RJAF radar station at Ajloun began tracking intense aerial activity over Israel, starting from 0715. This information was forwarded to Major General Riyadh, who immediately passed it on to the Supreme Command in Cairo. However, the latter did not receive the message in time to alert the UARAF, and the destruction of much of this force practically sealed the fate of all the involved Arab armies.

Originally announced under the fake premise of a supposed Egyptian attack on Israel, the Israeli offensive opened at 0845 (Egyptian time) on 5 June, and was anything but ‘pre-emptive’, as usually explained by the Israelis: not only because Egypt did not intend to attack Israel – and made this public several times – but because neither the Egyptian nor any other Arab military had any kind of plans for an invasion, and even less so for the ‘destruction’ of Israel. Furthermore, at the moment of Israeli attack, almost the entire Egyptian military leadership was either on board two Ilyushin Il-14 transports underway to Bir Thamada AB, on the Sinai, or was awaiting their arrival at that base. While one of the transports – the plane carrying the Egyptian Vice-President and the Iraqi Prime Minister – landed at Fayid AB as it was being attacked by the Israelis, the Il-14 carrying the crucial Egyptian commander, Field Marshal Amer, and his entourage remained airborne throughout the entire first wave of Israeli attacks on Egyptian air bases, its pilot searching for a safe landing place for more than 90 minutes. Eventually, it landed at Cairo IAP sometime between 1030 and 1045. Amer then suffered the additional humiliation of having to use a taxi to get to the Supreme Headquarters. Arriving there some 20 minutes later, he and C-in-C UARAF, Air Marshal Sidki Mahmoud Sidki, were informed of the full extent of the Israeli onslaught. Although receiving incorrect information that only between 37 and 40 Egyptian fighters had survived the first wave of attacks, Amer was elated when the same reports claimed the downing of 86 enemy aircraft. Bypassing General Riyadh in Amman, he called Damascus and Baghdad and requested the Syrian and Iraqi air arms to execute Operation Rashid immediately.[60] Only then, minutes later, did he wire the C-in-C UAC, Major General Riyadh, in Amman, telling him that the Israelis had lost 75 percent of their air power and that the Egyptian Army was mounting an offensive into the Negev Desert. This was an obvious lie, but it seems that from around this time, Amer began to suffer from such shock and confusion that he was entirely incapable of rational thinking and even less of taking aggressive action that could still have altered the outcome of the battle.

JORDANIAN CONTROVERSY

According to the Jordanians, it was 0850 Jordanian time (0950 Egyptian time) when Field Marshall Amer passed the following coded message to Amman:

> Israeli planes have started to bomb air bases of the UAR and approximately 75 percent of the enemy’s aircraft have been destroyed or put out of action. The counter-attack by the Egyptian air force is under way against Israel. In Sinai, UAR troops have engaged the enemy and taken the offensive on the ground. As a result, FM Amer has ordered the commander-in-chief of the Jordanian Front to open a new front and to launch offensive operations according to the plan outlined the day before.[61]

However, as explained above, at the time the Jordanians say they received this message, Amer was still on board an Il-14 that was searching for a safe place to land. He was nowhere near his HQ and could not have sent any such orders to Amman for at least another hour. Even assuming that Amer might have sent such a message immediately after landing at Cairo IAP, around 1030 Egyptian time (0930 in Amman), he would have been forced to use an open telephone line instead of other means, which - according to available Jordanian accounts - was not the case. Given that no Egyptian officers dared issue any kind of orders even to UARAF units without Amer’s word, it is quite obvious that this was even less likely to be the case when it came to orders from Cairo to Amman. Therefore, the available Jordanian accounts – usually accepted by Israeli and Western observers without any critique – raise a number of questions, ranging from whether the Jordanians indeed received any kind of orders from Cairo at 0900 Jordanian time that morning, to whether this was an attempt by King Hussein to provide an excuse for the inaction of his military. Alternatively, if there was such a message, then who in Cairo would have been in a position to issue any kind of orders in the name of Amer? Is it conceivable that this message actually came from an Israeli source, as a means of prompting the Jordanians into action and thus giving the Israelis an excuse to occupy Jerusalem and the West Bank?

This was not the only inconsistency related to Jordanian reports concerning their actions on that day.

The next problem from the Jordanian standpoint stemmed from the fact that the supposed message arrived from Cairo around 0900 Jordanian time, but the first report from Ajloun that morning - the one citing a large number of Israeli aircraft flying in the direction of Egypt - was *ignored*. In fact, Major Firas Ajlouny immediately demanded permission to take off and attack Israeli air bases, arguing that the Israeli fighters would be returning from attacks on Egypt short on fuel and would thus present easy targets. However, his request became mired in lengthy discussions between superior officers in Amman and was eventually denied. The reason for this refusal was that the radar on Ajloun subsequently reported a large number of aircraft coming out of Egypt and flying towards Israel. Due to the Egyptian announcement that the war had begun with an Israeli attack, the Jordanians claimed to have wrongly concluded that the UARAF was in the process of launching a counter-attack on Israel.[62] King Hussein explained this decision as follows:

> [When] our radar screen showed planes flying from Egypt towards Israel, we didn’t give it a thought. We simply assumed they were from the UARAF on their way to a mission over Israel. They weren’t. They were Israeli bombers [sic] on the way home, their first mission against Egypt accomplished.

According to Jordanian sources, around 1100 their time (1200 Cairo time), a second message from Cairo arrived in Amman, this time apparently genuinely from Amer, who stated that Israel’s air offensive was continuing but that 75 percent of the IDF/AF had meanwhile been put out of action. He claimed that the UARAF had put many Israeli air bases out of action and that ground forces had penetrated the Negev. It is at least interesting to note that the essence of this message is actually the same as the one that supposedly arrived two hours previously – and that the RJAF was still not ordered into action. An indirect confirmation that no orders for an attack on Israel were issued by King Hussein or Major General Riyadh before 1100 Amman time is provided by recollections of Jasser Zayyad. He explained the reason:

> Just after 0900 I was told to go to the aircraft. Then things began to change. First they wanted to load our aircraft with rockets, but there were no keys to the ammunition depot where these were stored. While Bader Zaza took off in an Alouette to meet the vehicle and get the keys, we heard news on the radio of Egyptians shooting [down] so many aircraft. We knew this was impossible and that this war was already turning into a mess.[63]

Another pilot confirmed Zayyad's recollection as follows:

> I went to Firas to tell him about our poor target intelligence for the attack on Netanya, only to hear that we could not go as there were no rockets. These were still in the stores and the doors were locked, the keys being with Saleh Kurdi - in Amman! Saleh sent the keys via a messenger, but to shorten our waiting, Bader Zaza took off in an Alouette to look for the latter, finding him just before the village of Mafraq. He landed and got the keys. Our Armament Officer, Shaher Shahin, took the keys, opened the doors and found the rockets still packed in their boxes … Because of this postponement, that morning our ground crews managed to outfit only four Hunters with Hispano-Suiza rockets of 3in calibre. These should have had high-explosive warheads, but later on it turned out they were all practice rockets, with solid warheads.[64]

During the wait for the keys, a decision was taken to slightly adapt the composition of the two attack formations, and Ihsan Shurdom as well as Pakistani Flight Lieutenant Saif-ul-Azam - himself a veteran of the 1965 Kashmir War between India and Pakistan, in which he scored one confirmed kill - were assigned to the formation that was to fly the attack against Israel. However, only moments after this meeting was over, they were re-tasked back to air defence. Azam recalled the reason for this change:

> Official Pakistani clearance for me to fly air defence missions only was received on the morning of 5 June, and thus I had to hurriedly switch roles on the tarmac. After waiting in the cockpit for half an hour I learnt that the Israeli Air Force had struck Egyptian airfields. Sitting helplessly on the ground waiting for orders was nerve-racking and all pilots squirmed in their cockpits to seek revenge.[65]

The Jordanian pilots thus had to keep on waiting next to or inside their aircraft, ready to launch at the shortest possible notice, but valuable time lapsed without an order for take-off. Although the RJAF was on alert and supposedly ready for combat operations, and despite receiving a (supposed) order from Amer to attack Israel as early as 0900 that morning, the Jordanian commanders simply failed to act.

At around 1200 Amman time, President Nasser supposedly telephoned King Hussein and repeated Amer's statement, requesting Jordan quickly take action pending a UN intervention that would impose a ceasefire.[66] Finally, sometime before 1.00, yet another message arrived from Amer, this time instructing Major General Riyadh and the Jordanians to move their armoured brigades to provide support for an Egyptian division supposedly advancing towards Beersheba in southern Israel. Although supposedly 'horrified' by the latter order, and despite their agreement with the Egyptians not to enter the 'active phase of operations' until after the arrival of all the reinforcements from other Arab nations, King Hussein maintained that his generals then called their counterparts in Damascus to coordinate their actions. However, the Syrians - none of whom are mentioned by name - supposedly responded with the following:

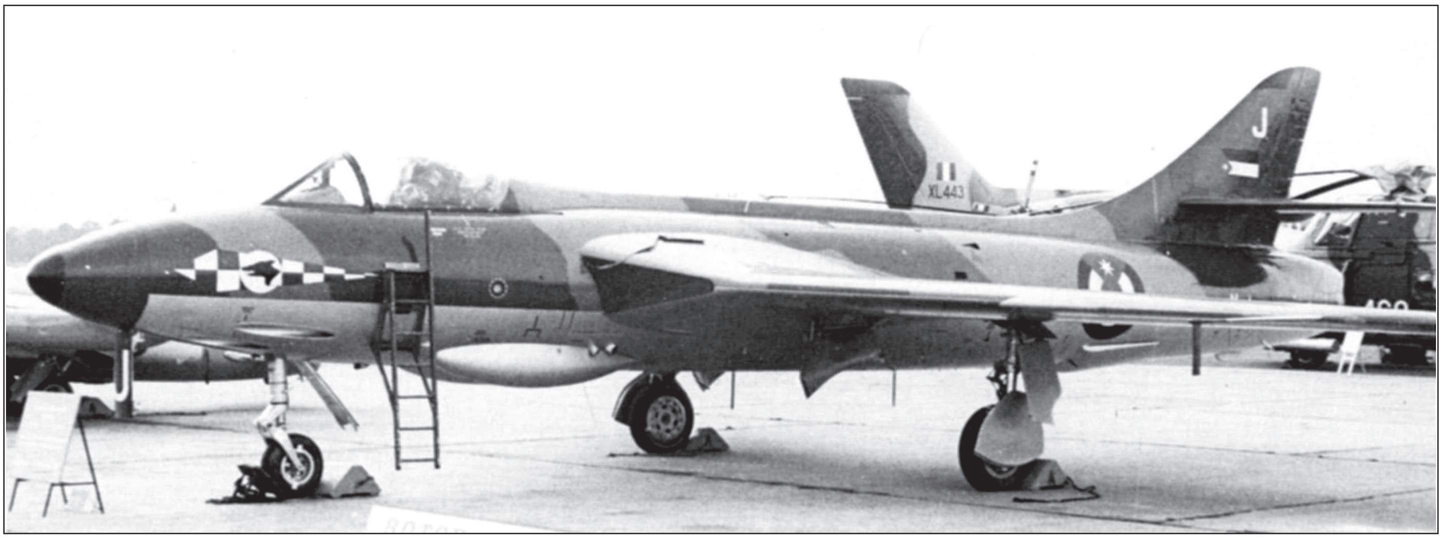
> The outbreak of the war has taken us by surprise. Our pilots are on a training flight … They asked us to give them first a half-hour, then an hour, and so on until 10.45 [Amman time], when they asked us for yet another delay which we also granted. At 11.00, we couldn't wait any longer.[67]

However, this explanation poses yet more questions, the most significant being: if the Jordanian military was expected to wait and Jordanian politicians were not eager to instigate offensive operations or 'seize Israeli territory', why were they then complaining that they had to wait for action from other Arab nations?

In the absence of precise answers to all these questions, the only logical conclusion is that the Jordanians did not receive any orders to attack Israel at 0900 their time, and indeed not before around 1000 (1100 in Cairo) - at the earliest. That was around the time that Field Marshall Amer reached GHQ in Cairo. King Hussein and Major General Riyadh did not issue any kind of orders for an attack on Israel until at least a few minutes later, and most likely after 1145, once they had learned that the first wave of the IrAF was on its way towards Israel. Therefore, it is not as if the Jordanians were 'reacting to orders from Amer' or 'waiting for the Iraqis and Syrians', as usually claimed. On the contrary. King Hussein, MajorGeneral Riyadh and the Jordanian generals at GHQ in Amman had spent two valuable hours waiting for an order from Cairo to act, at the same time exchanging threats with Israel (via the CO of the UN contingent in Jerusalem, the Norwegian General Odd Bull) and quarrelling about whether the Jordanian Army should follow Amer's orders and Riyadh's idea of attacking al-Mukkaber Hill south of Jerusalem, or implement the Jordanian pre-war planning which envisaged the 'encirclement of the Jewish-held part of Jerusalem to gain an excellent bargain for the return of any land Israel might have seized'. A heated debate clearly developed, in the course of which Riyadh and Salim exchanged insults, further increasing confusion.[68] Eventually, the generals at HQ Eastern Front United Arab Command (EFUAC) failed to reach an agreement and ordered the Jordanian military into action only once they were prompted to do so - probably by Amer's genuine message, received sometime before 1300, and certainly in accordance with his orders, which were soon to prove disastrous.

The final controversy surrounding involvement of Jordanian Hunters in the June 1967 War concerns the issue of the targets assigned to them. Various Jordanian reports (and Western sources) mention attacks on a number of different targets, ranging from northern to central Israel. Curiously, according to Iraqi sources, some of the targets usually said to have been attacked by the Jordanians were actually hit by IrAF fighters. Ironically, the Israelis have not made the situation any clearer, with reports that usually completely ignore the Iraqi side and instead support the Jordanian reports, while at the same time only stressing attacks on civilian objectives. From what can be ascertained, Major General Riyadh's orders dictated that, 'the air forces of Jordan, Syria and Iraq were put on combat alert and ordered to commence air strikes "immediately"'. Ironically, no source cites any specific timing, nor targets actually hit by the RJAF. This might indicate that the target selection was left at the discretion of the responsible commanders of the forces in question, which were to act according to the plan for Operation Riyadh.[69] Whatever was the case, targets actually assigned to pilots

Pilots of No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, prior to the June 1967 War with Israel, together with King Hussein and his sons. Flight Lieutenant Saif-ul-Azam (PAF) and Lieutenant Ihsan Shurdom can be seen standing first and second in the front row, to the left of the king's shoulder. (Saif-ul-Azam Collection)



The Hunter F.Mk 6 708/J after its overhaul and upgrade to F.Mk 73 standard at the SBAC show in Farnborough in July 1965. Note the large portions of the nose and wingtips (possibly also the entire fin) painted red, related to agreements reached within the UAC back in 1964, and intended to serve as quick-identification measure in case aircraft of different Arab air forces operated over Israel if there was a major war. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

of No. 1 Squadron indicate that available intelligence was miserable, and not 'better than Egyptian', as usually stressed by the Jordanians. If the Jordanians were indeed in possession of superior intelligence, they would have ordered their air force into all-out attacks on air bases like Hatzor, Tel Nov or Ramat David – which, as we are to see, was simply not the case.

RAID ON KFAR SIRKIN

While the Egyptians and Jordanians were quarrelling about how best to attack the wrong targets, and irrespective of King Hussein's complaints, it was the Iraqis who were the first within the UAC to decide to act in reaction to the Israeli attack on Egypt.[70] Iraqi pilots deployed at H-3 were waiting for orders to move to Jordan and flying familiarisation flights around their new base. Around 1030 Baghdad time (0930 in Cairo, 0830 in Israel), all the pilots were called to a briefing, as recalled by Faysal Abdul Mohsen:

> 1st Lieutenant Najdat an-Naqeeb and me were on a familiarisation flight near H-3 when the order came for us to land. Immediately after we were told that war had broken out between Egypt, Syria and Israel, that we should help push our aircraft into blast pens, and then to expect orders to attack Kfar Sirkin airfield, near Tel Aviv, as ordered by Major General Riyadh in Amman. The time-on-target was set for 1325 Baghdad time.[71]

Eight No. 6 Squadron pilots were to fly this mission in two formations, one of five and the other of three aircraft. Led by Lieutenant Colonel Adel Suleimany, the first group included 1st Lieutenants Faysal Abdul Mohsen, Hazem Hassan Kassem, Hassan al-Khither and Fadhil Mustafa, and received the task of attacking Kfar Sirkin air base. The second formation was to launch one hour after the first and hit Lod IAP. Its pilots were Major Mumtazz Abdel Ali al-Saydoon, 1st Lieutenant Najdat an-Naqeeb and 1st Lieutenant Emad Ahmed Ezzat.[72]

By the time the pilots returned to their aircraft, the Hunters were already fully armed, each carrying 24 British-made 3in rockets and two drop tanks, in addition to a full load of ammunition for their four 30mm ADEN cannon. The Hunters' air-conditioning systems were also working at full power to ensure their cockpits remained comfortable despite the simmering heat outside. The targeting information they received followed the original plan for Operation Riyadh, yet portrayed a rather confused picture, as one of the involved pilots recalled:

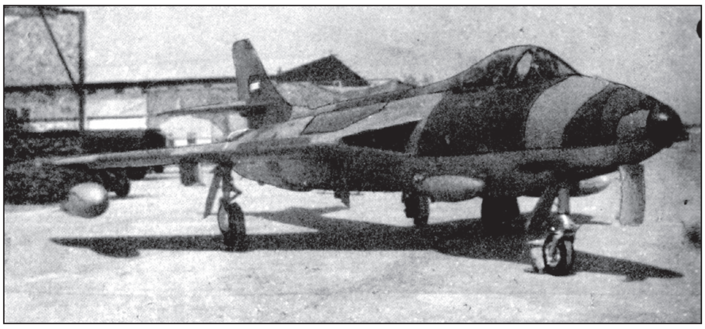
> The intelligence was that the objective of our formation - Petah Tikva airfield east of Tel Aviv - was constructed as Royal Air Force 'Kfar Sirkin' by the British in 1941, and used by the RAF until 1948. We were told that ever since 1948 it had been an air base of the IDF/AF and that we should expect to find numerous transport aircraft there, as well as to expect strong air defences. In fact, as we learned only years later, this was a small airfield, in use by the Flying School of the IDF/AF from 1949 until 1955, and by the Paratrooper School ever since, but only used for the dispersal of units equipped with transport aircraft.[73]

Pilots were enthusiastic:

> We took off at 1215 [Baghdad time] and completed the first leg of our flight without any problems. We climbed to 23,000ft [7,010m] and continued to Mafraq AB in Jordan. Once there, we saw the Hunters of the Royal Jordanian Air Force - still on the ground. We did a circle while descending to low level, and then turned in the direction of the Jordan River. It was a textbook mission like the many we had completed in the war against Kurds: no technical problems, everything was fine. Some of us were singing while underway.

Barely a minute after passing the Jordan River, Captain Suleimany and his wingman popped up to start their attack. One of the participating Iraqis recalled what happened next:

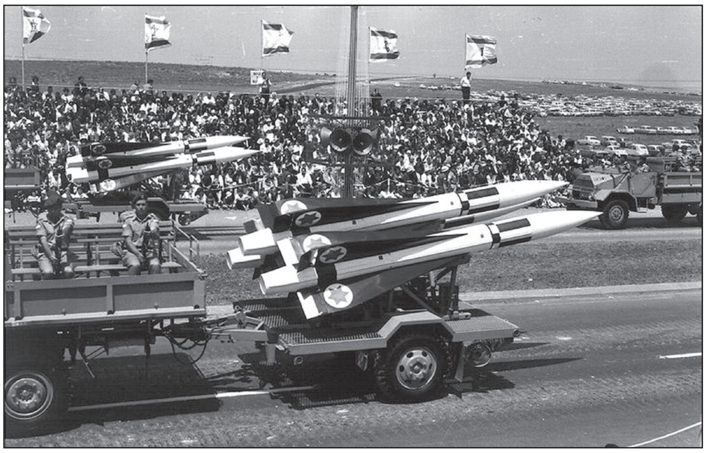
An Iraqi Hunter pilot gives the thumbs-up to his ground crew, prior to flying a training sortie before the June 1967 War. Iraqi pilots had gathered considerable experience during the fighting against Kurdish separatists and considered themselves ready for a war with Israel. (Nour Bardai Collection)


The Hunter F.Mk 59A serial number 668 (note the serial number applied on the door of the nosewheel bay) at Habbaniyah, before the June 1967 War. Note that this aircraft is parked in front of a shallow blast pen covered by camouflage netting - a very unusual practice for most Arab air forces at the time, but introduced by the IrAF in 1963 on advice from Indian instructors. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

An IrAF Hunter flying at very low level over the Judean Hills while withdrawing towards Jordan, following the raid on Kfar Sirkin, in the early afternoon of 5 June 1967. The Iraqi attack caught the Israelis by surprise and no Mirages managed to intercept the intruders. However, HAWK SAMs fired from the site protecting Tel Nov air base might have disrupted the attack runs by the last two Hunters. (IDF)

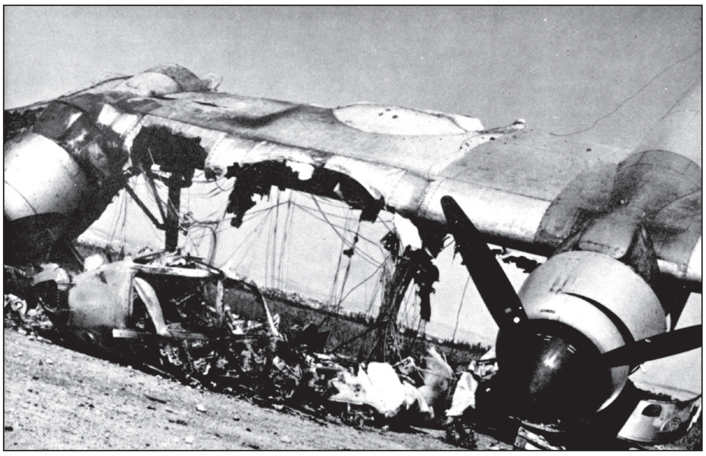
> In front of us we saw two runways, a control tower and several scattered buildings - together with a number of transport aircraft parked on the tarmac: [Douglas C-47] Dakota and Noratlas transports painted in silver. The first pair dove to attack, each aircraft unleashing all of their 24 unguided rockets at once, as per instructions we received during the briefing. Captain Suleimany and his wingman reported hits on two Noratlas transports and one Dakota … The second pair followed in the same fashion, one releasing its rockets towards the control tower and the other at the runway intersection. But while number 4 was diving towards his target he saw a trace of thick white smoke streaking into the sky and shouted, 'Missiles!'. As soon as the last of his rockets was away, he made a hard turn to the right. We later concluded that the number 4 came under attack by the Israeli MIM-23 HAWK SAM site protecting Tel Nov.
>
> Faysal Abdul Mohsen Mohsen specified:
>
> Captain Suleimany pounced upon two Noratlas, his wingman a Dakota, all three destroyed. Me and Mustafa destroyed a Noratlas each, parked next to the control tower.

The Iraqis returned over the Jordan River at low level, sighting columns of Israeli armour moving in the direction of Jenin, and Jordanian artillery rounds exploding around them. Without further disturbance, the formation then climbed back to 23,000ft (7,010m) for its return to H-3. In summary, these five pilots claimed to have



MIM-23 HAWK SAMs during a military parade in Israel before the June 1967 War. At that time, it was the most advanced weapon of its type in the entire Middle East. (IDF)

A pre-war photograph of paratroopers about to embark in IDF/AF Noratlases. It is possible that this scene was photographed at Kfar Sirkin, sometime in the late 1950s. (IDF)



Apparently released by mistake - in the belief that it showed the wreckage of an Arab transport destroyed by the IDF/AF — this photograph from an Israeli publication printed shortly after the June 1967 War clearly shows the wreckage of a Noratlas transport. Remnants of the cockpit are in the centre, below the mid-section of the wings and between the two engines. If Israeli reports that only one Noratlas was destroyed at Kfar Sirkin AB are correct, this aircraft was registered as 4X-FAX. (IDF via Albert Grandolini)

destroyed or damaged seven Dakota and Noratlas transports on the ground. Mohsen specified the source for this conclusion:

> Two days later we captured two Israeli pilots. One of them said that the attack on Kfar Sirkin delivered a painful blow, because we destroyed transport aircraft full of paratroopers.

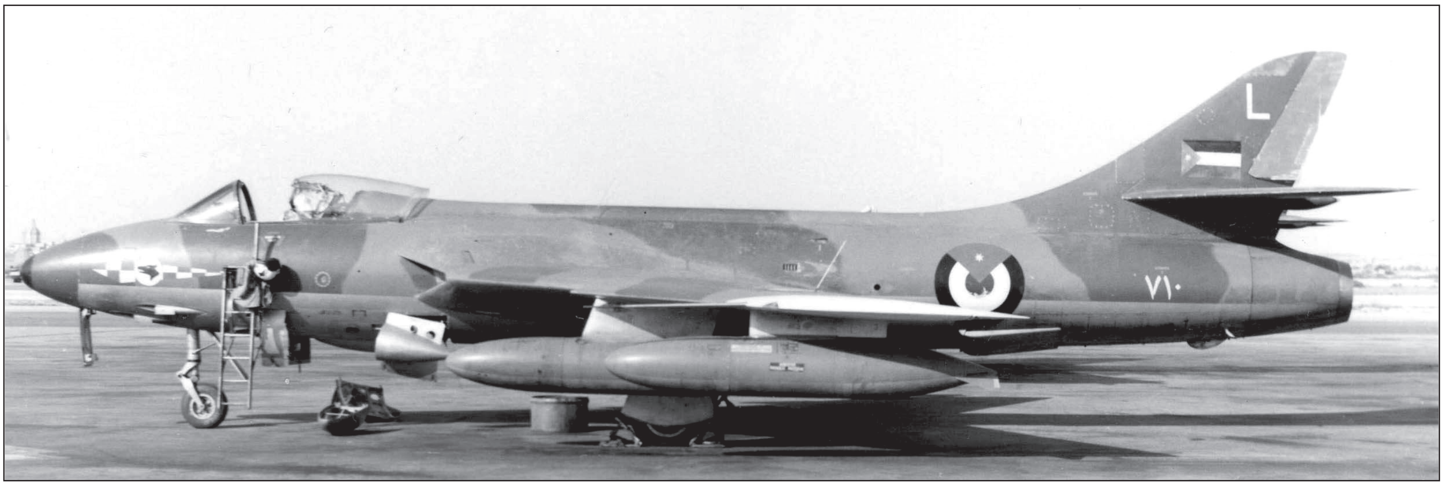
The IrAF thus became convinced that this raid prevented a paratrooper assault on el-Arish, which the Israelis are known to have planned for the early hours of 6 June. However, the results of the Iraqi attack not only remain disputed, but have also been ignored to this day. Initially, the Israeli media reported only an 'aerial attack' on Kfar Yavetz, in the Tel Mond area (some 20km/12.4 miles north of Tel Aviv), by 'Jordanian Hunters', supposedly taking place around 1315 local time.[74] Ever since, the Israelis and Jordanians have claimed - in near-unison - that the raid on Kfar Sirkin was flown by Jordanian Hunters. This despite the fact that it is well known that all the RJAF Hunters were still on the ground when the first Iraqi formation passed over Mafraq.[75] The Israelis also claim that only one Noratlas (registered as 4X-FAX) and a civilian Piper Super Cub were destroyed, several people being injured on the ground - and that their assault on el-Arish was cancelled because it became unnecessary.[76]

ATTACK ON 'NETANYA AIR BASE'

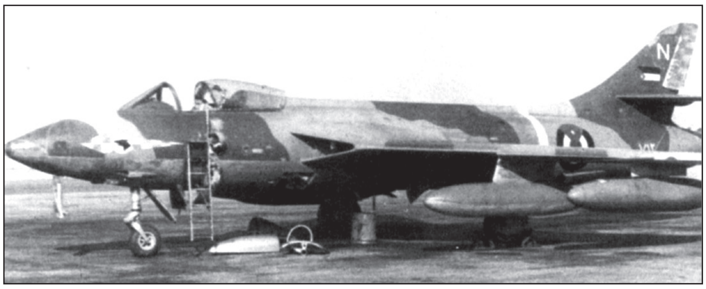
While the differences between Iraqi and Israeli accounts about the attack on Kfar Sirkin are almost unavoidable, the situation is very different in regards to targets attacked by the RJAF Hunters. While practically all the Jordanian - and thus also the Israeli - accounts state that these hit Kfar Sirkin and Megiddo, the pilots involved recall something completely different. The first formation of three RJAF Hunters - flown by Firas Ajlouni, Jasser Zayyad and Mohammad Shiab - launched between 1140 and 1150 Amman time and thus entered Israeli airspace close behind the first Iraqi formation.[77] However, its target was not Kfar Sirkin, but 'Netanya Air Base', as recalled by Jasser Zayyad:

> We received no intelligence briefing … While taking off, we heard a radio call from King Hussein, 'Hashemite Red Section: good luck to you all!' … Firas, Shiab and me went low level, and then pulled up. Firas said he was going for the runway and I felt sick: what can rockets do to a runway? Then Firas said he was going for the hangar and Shiab should go for the control tower. There was lots of AAA, and I told Firas he was being fired on, but Firas replied, 'No, YOU are being fired on!' We did only one pass and headed home, the mission lasting just under 30 minutes. The second section followed shortly later and we were covered by three Hunters, flown by Ihsan, Hanna and Saif, but these did not cross the armistice line … We landed on the western end of the runway and started refuelling and rearming. That's when I clashed with Firas because I had stayed behind the formation and used my guns to strafe a troop movement on the highway east of Netanya. Firas did not like this and said I would be court-martialled if I ever went off the assigned target. Perhaps he wanted me to keep the ammo for protection.

According to Israeli sources, the target attacked by RJAF Hunters was the ABIC Pharmaceutics Factory, outside Netanya, where one person was killed and seven – including two female workers –injured.[78] Unbeknownst to the RJAF pilots, on the way back towards Mafraq, their formation was nearly intercepted by a pair of Israeli Mirage IIICJs from No. 117 Squadron, scrambled from Ramat David. In fact, the Mirages were late in trying to catch the Iraqis, and then their GCI provided an incorrect vector for the Jordanian formation. The Hashemite Red Section returned to Mafraq undisturbed.



A fine study of the RJAF Hunter F.Mk 6 710/L in 1966 or 1967. Lacking the capability to maintain supersonic speed (except in a shallow dive), the Hunter was considered obsolete as an interceptor by 1967, but remained a powerful ground-attack asset and an aircraft beloved by its pilots. (Albert Grandolini Collection)



The RJAF Hunter F.Mk 6 serial number 712/N in late 1966 or early 1967, still having its fin painted in red and wingtips in white. After being flown by Ihsan Shurdom during the air battle of Samu, on 13 November 1966, it saw even more action on 5 June 1967. The eventual fate of this aircraft remains unknown, but it was probably destroyed in one of the Israeli air strikes on Mafraq AB or Amman IAP. (Albert Grandolini collection)

CHAOS OVER THE WEST BANK

Currently available information does not allow a clear conclusion to be drawn as regards the target hit by the second formation of RJAF Hunters launched to attack Israel. It is also unknown if these fighters indeed reached any of their targets there, despite the following claim from King Hussein:

> Three times, our Hawker Hunters attacked the bases at Netanya in Israel without a loss. And our pilots reported that they destroyed four enemy planes on the ground, the only ones they had seen.

None of the RJAF pilots available for interview could recall any attack sorties other than the one mentioned above. Nevertheless, it is likely that four Hunters – apparently flown by Wasfi Ammari, George Matta, Ghazi Smadi and, probably, Hanna Najjar – did reach Megiddo, another small airfield in northern Israel, though at least one with a 'secondary' military purpose.[79] The Jordanians might indeed have destroyed one or two Piper Cubs – or wooden decoys – on the ground there , as often claimed by various Israeli and Western reports. However, while the aircraft that attacked Megiddo are said to have used rockets for that purpose, as explained by Jumean (see above), the ground crews managed to arm on time only few of the aircraft with such weapons: the three Hunters of the Hashemite Red Section, plus the example manned by Ihsan Shurdom (see below for details). The latter did not participate in this mission because Shurdom, as Saif-ul-Azam's wingman, was rescheduled to fly top cover instead. Furthermore, it was Syrian MiG-17Fs that attacked Megiddo.

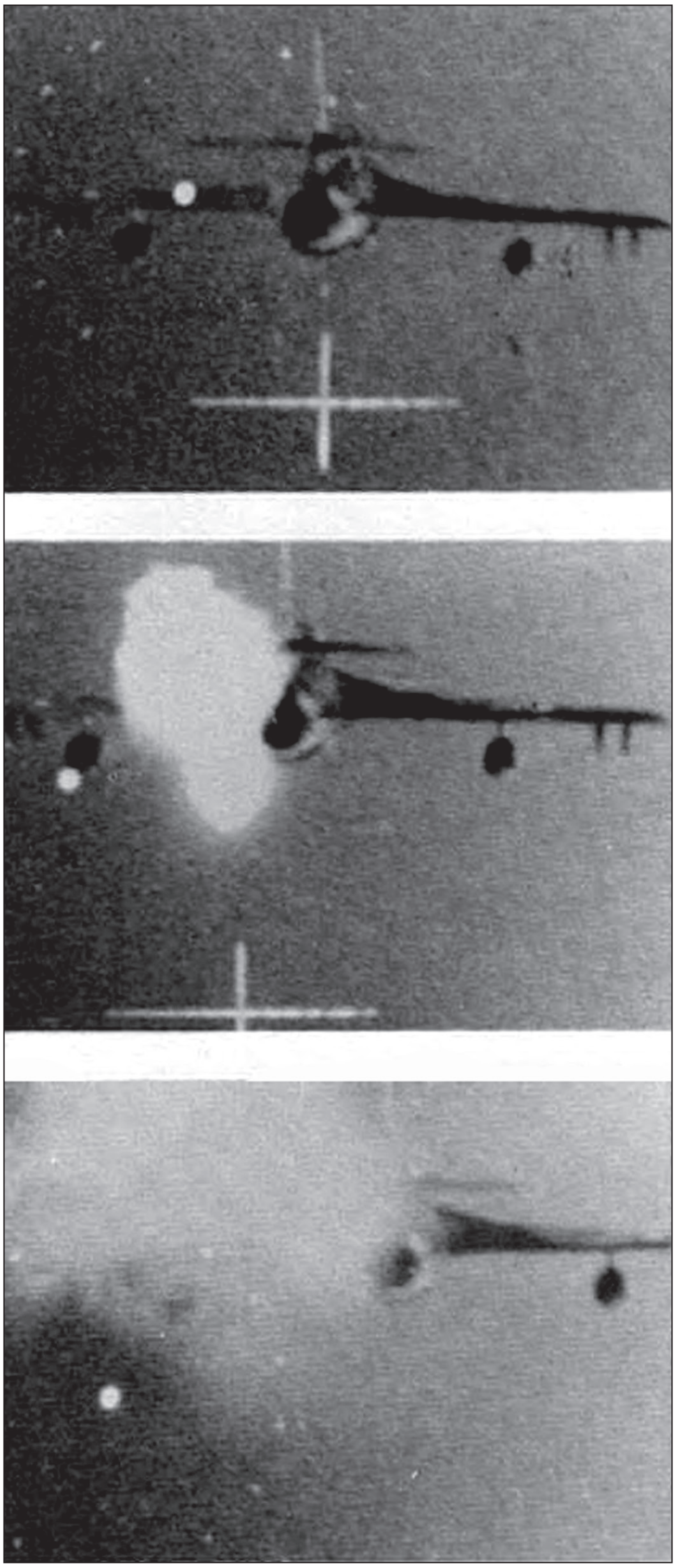
All that can be said with certainty is that by the time the next four Jordanian aircraft approached Israeli airspace, at least two (but more likely four) Mirage IIICJs of the Ramat David-based No. 117 Squadron IDF/AF were airborne. According to Zayyad, part of this RJAF formation – including Ihsan Shurdom, Hanna Najjar and Saif-ul-Azam – was not even to enter Israeli airspace, but provided top cover only as far as the armistice lines:

> The strike formation had air cover, consisting of three Hunters flown by Ihsan, Hanna and Saif but they received the order not to go over Israel.

Furthermore, neither Shurdom nor Azam ever mentioned Wasfi flying in formation with them on that day, even though they did confirm that Hanna Najjar and Ghazi Smadi were airborne around the same time. On the contrary, while some Jordanian sources indicate that Azam was paired with Wasfi, and Shurdom flew with Najjar, Shurdom and Azam recalled flying their mission only as a pair. Whatever happened, under as yet unclear circumstances, the Hunter flown by Captain Wasfi Ammari was engaged by a Mirage IIICJ flown by Israeli Captain Oded Sagee while underway at low level over the Beit Shean Valley in Israel. The only presently available account about the action that followed was provided by an Israeli source:

> Flying east, they [two Mirages from No. 117 Squadron] approached the enemy aircraft at high speed. The Hunters broke away, apparently having received warning from their radar. Oded's partner attached himself to one of them and they both dived and disappeared for a moment. The controller directed Oded towards the other, and he entered the duel with the advantage. He fired a Shafrir missile … but it dropped downwards, below the enemy's engine … Oded had no choice but to rely on his cannon.
>
> They crossed the Jordan River, and the chase quickly headed toward Amman. Oded shifted around and again came up behind the Hunter. He closed in his range, almost too fast, to 200m [656ft]. Aiming carefully, he fired one long burst. The Hunter's wing broke off, and the aircraft began spinning.[80]

Wasfi Ammari bailed out over Jerash but landed hard, suffering injuries to his back that ended his career with the RJAF.[81]



Still from a gun-camera film showing the attack of an Israeli Mirage IIICJ on the Hunter flown by Wasfi Ammari, during the early afternoon of 5 June 1967. Ammari's fighter was obviously armed with Sura unguided rockets, installed on at least two banks under either wing. (IDF)

LIKE A BOLT OUT OF THE BLUE

Meanwhile, Saif-ul-Azam and Ihsan Shurdom reached a position high over Barmah, a village next to Ajloun. Shurdom recalled a very important detail about the start of his mission:

> I took off with an aircraft armed with 24 rockets and had to shoot them off to get rid of them, as my aircraft was too heavy for air combat.

Azam continued:

> After take-off, I contacted the radar for further instruction. The controller announced a vector and we headed in the required direction. Soon, another vector was announced and we changed our heading again. It was not long before the controller declared that there were too many aircraft and it was difficult to make out who was who. We were asked to be on our own. Noting the controller's dilemma I called my wingman to stay close. The visibility in the hot, dusty desert was barely a mile and there were no signs of enemy aircraft. Rechecking with the controller if there were any aircraft approaching Mafraq, my concerns were confirmed when we received an affirmative reply.

Turning around, Azam and Shurdom headed for their base. Minutes later, contact with the radar in Ajloun was lost. This was the moment that the first Israeli formation ordered to attack Jordan - four Super Mystère B2s from No. 105 Squadron IDF/AF, originally scrambled to attack el-Mansourah airfield in northern Egypt, but then diverted - reached its target and knocked it out. The RJAF was thus left without its 'eyes' right at the opening of the Israeli onslaught.

By 1340 Amman time, all but four of the Hunters - those flown by Azam, Shurdom, Najjar and Smadi - were on the ground in Mafraq, and in the process of refuelling and rearming. Like most of the other air forces of the time, the RJAF operated according to widely accepted norms of preparing its aircraft for the next mission with turnaround rates of one to two hours. This was clearly far too slow: by that time, two formations, each of four Mystère IVAs, were already approaching the main Jordanian air base and about to reach it almost simultaneously. When the Israeli attack came, Jasser Zayyad was still preparing for the next sortie to Israel:

> Another target was assigned to us - Ein Shamer - and we went to the same three aircraft. Then Firas got a telephone call. Target changed: instead of Ein Shamer we should go for Lydda. Firas said there was no plan, but I knew the area (I used to see it from my home). But Firas wanted a detailed plan. After another briefing, we got back to the aircraft and started. Because Samir joined us, our formation consisted of four aircraft.

As the pilots were taking their places in the cockpits, eight Mystères appeared over Mafraq to hit the runway and claim the destruction of three Hunters on the ground. Much too late, air raid sirens began to wail, announcing the tragedy that was to follow. Zayyad continued:

> That's when the sirens went on and someone motioned us to shut down the engines. I got down and then saw three, then four, then five aircraft … Someone on the ground said these would be the Iraqis. I said they were Mystères, so we ran to the trenches, while Firas called Shiab to man his aircraft. George was there too and he asked Firas if he wanted him and me instead, but he said no. Thus, only Firas and Shiab started their engines. Firas moved for the runway as the first Israeli aircraft was diving in that direction. The second Israeli attacked Firas' aircraft and it caught fire. The third Israeli attacked Hunters near our trenches. I looked up from there and saw Shiab walking back. I told him to get in the trench.

Jumean explained what happened next:

> The Israeli leader dropped two bombs in the middle of the runway, while his wingman fired at the Hunters manned by Firas and Shiab: the tower held them on the ground much too long, to wait for instructions. Firas decided not to wait: he reached the runway when his aircraft was hit, and then [he] jumped out, but was burned to death by the exploding fuel. Samir attempted to help and opened a CO^2 bottle on him, but he was just a cinder.

Other Mystère IVAs hit Mafraq only seconds later. One of them was damaged - by ground fire, according to Israeli reports - right at the start of the attack, and had to disengage. Another first aborted his mission but then returned to strafe, claiming four Hunters destroyed on the ground. The other two Israelis reported engaging Hunters in air combat. Jumean recalled their attack:

> Farouq el-Abdeen and me had barely landed when the Israeli attack came. I told Farouq to get into the aircraft and ordered the fuel bowser away. We rolled towards the northern ORP for take-off in direction of the Baghdad Road. However, while underway there, we saw four Israeli fighters and I called Farouq to warn him. We jumped out of our aircraft and shouted at the AAA people to fire … There were many AAA guns around but their crews were waiting as they thought these would be the Iraqis. Then the guns opened up, left, right and centre, even when there were no enemy aircraft around.

It was around the same time that Azam and Shurdom returned over Mafraq. Once there, they spotted four aircraft flying in battle formation at low level. Through the haze, the camouflage of these aircraft appeared similar to that of the Hunters of the Iraqi formation that had passed by minutes before, while returning in the direction of H-3. Azam was thus led to believe that the aircraft in front of him must also have been returning from a raid on Israel. Following them for a while, he watched with amazement as they changed into echelon formation - getting ready for an attack! Realising his mistake, the Pakistani promptly manoeuvred behind the trailing attacker, the number 4 in the Israeli formation:

> As the aircraft was turning for the attack, I closed in and let off a fusillade from my four cannon. The Mystère caught fire and pieces started to fly off: I had to pull up to avoid hitting the debris.

Ihsan Shurdom, who lost sight of Azam's plane while returning towards Mafraq, recalled:

> I had a bet with Saif that if he shot down an Israeli, I would get him a girl … As we approached the area mentioned by the GCI, I saw a Hunter following two Mystères and I said, 'I am going to give you cover'. Saif said, 'Allah-u-Akbar', and shot the Israeli down.
>
> While pulling up, Azam looked around for other attackers:
>
> I noticed the smoke trail of two Mystères charging off towards the west at full power. As I turned hard for them Ihsan called a bogey to the right. I directed him to go for a one while I went for the pair on the left. I managed to get behind the trailing Mystère, which had started to manoeuvre, about to spoil my aim. During the frantic turn reversals, I fired four times but my bullets stayed off the mark. Then the enemy loosened the turn and straightened out in the direction of Israel. Closing in to about 600ft [183m], I squeezed the trigger for a fifth time. The Mystère started to trail smoke from its right wing and then ducked down before I could confirm if it had been terminally dispatched. Then the leader of the enemy pair attacked me. By this time, I was low on fuel and ammunition and decided to disengage and turn for Mafraq.

Azam claimed one Israeli as shot down and the other as damaged, while Shurdom claimed two kills:

> The Hunter was a very agile jet and our aim was to drag the Israelis into a low-level, low-speed dogfight in which their air-to-air missiles would be less effective. Saif and me shot down four and drove the rest away.

This confused air battle resulted in lots of over-claiming on both sides. Azam's and Shurdom's claims for at least three Israelis shot down were slightly closer to reality than the claims of their counterparts to have shot down two Hunters. However, contrary to the RJAF, the IDF/AF never officially recognised the claims of its pilots as 'confirmed'.

The Israeli pilots certainly did better in their strafing runs: although claiming up to 24 Hunters, they actually destroyed or badly damaged 13 Jordanian fighters. In turn, their first formation is known to have lost one Mystère, serial number 94, flown by Lieutenant Hananya Boleh, who was killed. According to Israeli reports, Boleh reported he was hit shortly after the leader of his formation bombed the runway at Mafraq, and then disappeared, never to be seen again. Foreign observers generally concluded that Boleh became the victim of the more experienced Azam and was shot down before the other Israeli pilots saw what happened to him. While another Mystère was - according to the Israelis - hit by ground fire, all three surviving fighter-bombers from this formation successfully returned to their base.[82]

Zayyad continued his description of the Israeli attack on Mafraq as follows:

> Khalid Mohammad Ali came in a Land Rover to check for us, and drove us away. Then the next Israeli wave came in and finished everything. Our AAA was not effective and the Israelis even hit the main hangar.

In fact, Jordanian AAA proved quite effective. The third Israeli formation to hit Mafraq consisted of four slow and vulnerable Ouragans. They encountered no opposition other than AAA fire and flew three attack patterns to claim the destruction of two Hunters on the ground. Then the number 3 was hit by ground fire and forced to disengage. While this formation was withdrawing in the direction of Israel, it became obvious that the number 4 was also damaged: the pilot failed to respond to calls from other formation members and eventually ventured straight into the 'no-fly zone' over the Dimona complex, where his aircraft was shot down by Israeli MIM-23 HAWK SAMs.[83] Shortly afterwards, two other Ouragan formations, one consisting of three and the other of four aircraft, completed the destruction of Mafraq air base. Finally, the sixth Israeli formation to attack Mafraq again suffered a loss to AAA, having its number 1 damaged badly enough for the pilot to eject safely over the Mediterranean Sea. With this, Mafraq air base and most of No. 1 Squadron RJAF were finished in a matter of only 45 minutes. Noting that to the Jordanians it appeared as if there were 'only' five attack waves, Nasri Jumean summarised as follows:

Major Firas Aljouni returned to Mafraq AB to fly with No. 1 Squadron, RJAF, on 5 June 1967. Tragically, he was killed while trying to take off in the course of the first Israeli air strike on the Jordanian air base. (RJAF)

> Five attacks in waves of three to four aircraft. First Mystères then Ouragans. They dropped delayed timed bombs so there were explosions for the next 30 minutes. We crawled to the squadron ready room where there were a couple of trenches and Khalid Mohammad Ali told us that Firas was killed … Everything around us was burning, aircraft and stores … When we got to the tower this was hit by four Ouragans too. Eventually, we decided to evacuate our base and our families to Mafraq village.

LIGHT WORK IN AMMAN

The reason why successive formations of Ouragans met no Jordanian fighters was that the pilots of the last four RJAF Hunters still in the air decided not to land at Mafraq, as recalled by Azam:

> Reckoning that the Mafraq runway had been rendered unfit for use, I called all aircraft to hold north while checking the feasibility of landing there. The runway was hit by several bombs and we decided to divert to Amman IAP.

Shurdom further recalled - and Azam confirmed - how his presence of mind saved the pair from the trap set up by Israeli intelligence:

> By the time our air battle was over, I had been hit by our ground fire. My aircraft was not handling right and I asked Saif to cover me. While trimming my aircraft, I called Mafraq to see if I could land. The answer was positive but I became suspicious and thus asked the controller for the name of my dog. There was no reply, so we headed for Amman. Once there, I called Abdel Haleem Majali in the tower to tell him I was having problems with my aircraft and to keep the guns tight. I landed with my Hunter jumping all over the runway and overshot by a few metres. Saif landed after me … Next I saw Hanna taxiing in as if in peacetime. He got out of his aircraft only once the attack came.

The crew of a Jordanian 40mm Bofors L/60 anti-aircraft gun. Although initially taken by surprise by the Israeli attacks, and confused by orders not to open fire, the gunners soon recovered and began causing considerable damage to those attacking Mafraq air base and Amman IAP. (Patricia Salti Collection)

However, the international airport outside the Jordanian capital did not offer any safety. The first Israeli formation to reach Amman IAP consisted of four Mirages from No. 119 Squadron IDF/AF that approached their target at high level. They found the last four RJAF Hunters on the ground because they were out of fuel, and AAA gunners not firing because they had a strict order not to open fire. Jiries Shoubat, then a communications officer serving with the RJAF, recalled what light work the four Israeli Mirages had:

> In the Operations Room, Saleh Kurdi ordered all the anti-aircraft artillery not to fire as they were expecting the arrival of our own aircraft and then the Iraqis. After some Hunters landed, Fouad Jamal took my bicycle to go off and try to refuel them. Then we saw some aircraft, apparently coloured silver, and we all thought these would be Iraqis. Everyone cheered - but then they attacked us for nearly 40 minutes.[84]

Baris al-Hadid, then the head of the Technical School in Amman and in charge of 700 students, walked down the runway watching the Hunters land. He had already heard that the Israelis had attacked Egypt but thought that the USSR had mediated and there would be no war:

> I was walking by the runway towards the place where Ihsan had landed, as if in a dream. Then Ihsan and Farhan Sa'adi came and pulled me into a trench. I was half in and half out when the first Israeli attacked and [I was] covered in earth within moments … Ihsan was worried because his aircraft was loaded: it could blow up. He wanted to return to his aircraft and I thought he wanted to scramble again - but it was actually for his gun-camera film, containing images of an attack on Israel. Farhan attempted to stop him but I cannot recall what happened … Meanwhile I saw Hanna get out of the aircraft and fall from the ladder: I thought he was dead.[85]

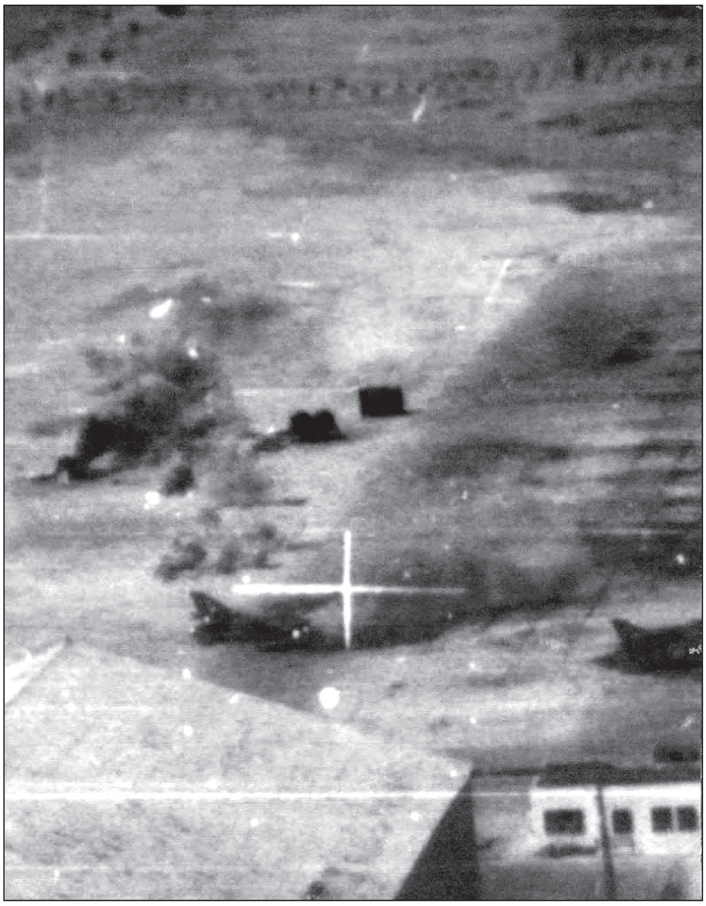
Mumtazz Abdel Ali as-Saydoon, seen earlier during his career, while disembarking a two-seat Hunter T.Mk 66. By the June 1967 War with Israel, as-Saydoon was already a very experienced pilot, and had converted to the MiG-21FL. (Nour Bardai Collection)

The Mirages first bombed the runway then returned to strafe, hitting one parked Hunter and two that appeared to still be taxiing. They then continued to knock out various transport and passenger aircraft parked around the airfield, as Shoubat recalled:

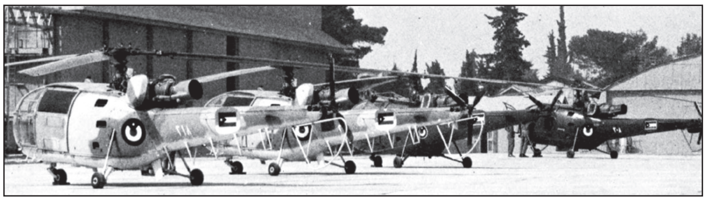
> They burned the UN Dakota, one of the RJAF [Westland WS-51] Widgeons, the Dove of the British Attaché and one [Beech] Bonanza. They hit another RJAF Dove but it did not burn.

Ahmad Juweiber, serving as a transport pilot with the RJAF, was also present at Amman IAP when the Mirages came, followed by four Ouragans that struck some 10 minutes later:

> We were all on standby but did not think that war would happen. Our only plan for the case of a war was to hide our aircraft … When the attack came, most of us were in trenches. Two Israeli waves hit us. Despite the damage, we already had four Dakotas flown to the Azrak airfield in the desert, by Awni Alaeddin, Farhan Sa'adi, Radi Monomey and Zeid Toukan. Marwan Nooreddin flew one of the Alouettes to Ruseifa, while Awni Maher - the king's personal pilot - took off in another in the middle of the Israeli attack and thus disregarding his own safety. Ducking the strafing Israeli jets, he took off and manhandled the small aircraft to safety behind the nearby hills. Three other Alouettes escaped any damage, together with one of the Hunters that landed at the IAP.



Gun-camera film showing an attack on two RJAF Hunters parked at Amman IAP in the early afternoon of 5 June 1967. All four fighters that landed there were swiftly destroyed, leaving the RJAF without a single operational fighter. (IDF)



A rare photograph of a row of SE.316B Alouette III helicopters operated by the Royal Flight, RJAF, at Amman IAP. (Albert Grandolini Collection)

Meanwhile, Ihsan Shurdom was underway from Amman back to Mafraq, in an attempt to rejoin his unit:

> Next we drove to the hospital to find out what happened to Firas. The hospital knew nothing. Together with Samir, I drove back to Mafraq to get Firas. We arrived there to find him still lying on the ground, very burned except for a small area between his shoulders that was slightly burnt. Samir used the fire extinguisher - actually a CO² bottle from the dinghy - on his smouldering body. Then he was taken to the hospital.'

In summary, it can be said that the Jordanians had put up a spirited battle, but could not keep up with the pace of successive Israeli attacks, which took them by surprise and destroyed the combat power of the RJAF. Theoretically, the Royal Jordanian Air Force was thus out of the war. In practice, this was not the case, since despite the shock and confusion there was still much fighting to do. Illustrating this, the second formation of IrAF Hunters, led by Major Mumtazz Abdel Ali as-Saydoon, with Lieutenants an-Naqeeb and Ezzat, was to attack Lod IAP exactly one hour after the

This ex-RJAF Hunter was put on a pole in front of the RJAF Museum in Amman several years ago. It was delivered to Jordan only after the 1967 War, but is decorated with two kill markings commemorating claims by Ihsan Shurdom from air battles over Mafraq on 5 June 1967. (Oscar Ruf Wilson)

first formation of five fighters had hit Kfar Sirkin. Although entering Israeli airspace entirely unopposed, the three pilots in question found themselves over unknown terrain. Having only completely obsolete maps for navigational aid, they failed to find Lod.[86]

Nevertheless, the two raids flown by the IrAF Hunters impressed the IDF/AF sufficiently for its High Command to issue the order for an attack on H-3 airfield in western Iraq.

6

BATTLE FOR H-3

It is only in recent years that most of the story behind a series of Israeli attacks on H-3 airfield in western Iraq during the June 1967 War has become known. While unable to hit any major air bases inside Iraq, the Israelis were determined not to let the Iraqis use H-3. Because the order for a raid on H-3 was issued while the Mystères and Ouragans were still busy destroying No. 1 Squadron RJAF, and no other aircraft were available for this task, a formation of four SNCASO 450 Vautour twin-engined fighter-bombers from the Ramat David-based No. 110 Squadron IDF/AF was selected. This was led by Captain Gideon Magen (in the two-seat Vautour IIN serial number 66, with Captain Alexander Inbar-Meltzer as navigator), with Lieutenants Ran Goren, Ya'acov Tal and Dan Ilan in single-seat Vautour IIAs. This was an ad-hoc operation: an attack against H-3 was not a part of the plan for Operation Focus, and Captain Magen's formation was initially scheduled to hit Tsaykal air base in Syria, before being retasked to attack Dmeyr, and finally Ras Banas in Egypt. It was only in the final moments before take-off that the force was ordered to attack Iraq. Correspondingly, the pilots involved were poorly prepared, having received no reconnaissance photographs of their target. Instead, they were instructed to follow the old H-Pipeline from Haifa via Mafraq to H-3 as a navigational aid. They were told to expect Hunters, MiG-21s and bombers as opposition. Ilan had to abort due to technical problems shortly after take-off, but the other three Vautours continued.[87]

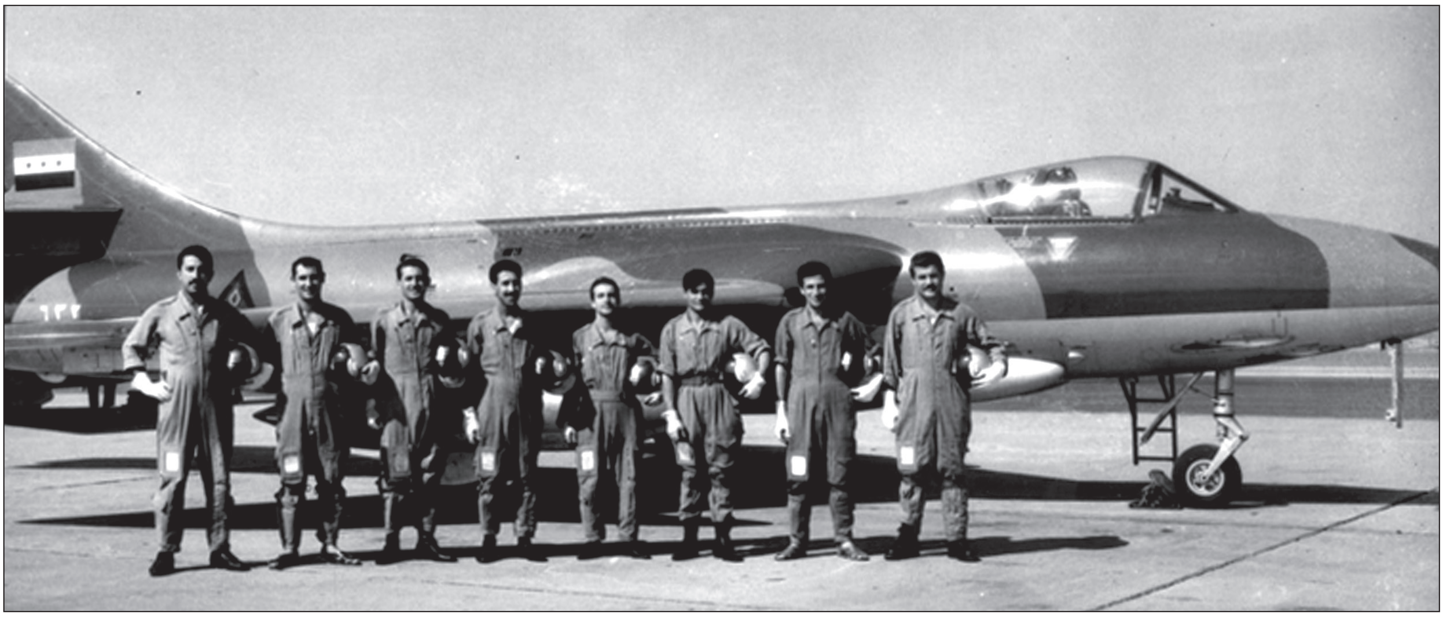
Following an ingress at only 15m (49ft), the Israelis approached H-3 around 1500 their time (1600 in Iraq). Faysal Abdul Mohsen recalled the situation at the Iraqi airfield:

> Around 1330, while we were still underway attacking Israel, MiG-21FLs from No. 17 Squadron arrived … After our return and post-mission debrief, I was standing on the tarmac next to Captain Adel Suleimany, watching the Hunters from the Lod attack returning to land and two MiGs taking off. Suleimany then ordered two Hunters to take-off and establish a CAP some 5 miles [8km] west of the airfield. As the Hunters rolled for take-off, we saw several aircraft in the west and thought these must be Jordanian Hunters, trying to land on our runway. Less than half a minute later, we recognised two Vautours.

Having problems with target identification, Captain Magen climbed to have a look around and find H-3, but as soon as he did so, his formation came under attack by the two MiG-21s that were already airborne. Without knowing that their opponents were not armed with any cannon, the Vautour pilots began to manoeuvre hard, in turn spoiling firing solutions for the R-3S missiles carried by the Iraqi MiGs. After several such manoeuvres, they managed to free themselves sufficiently to strafe some of the aircraft on the ground and then bomb the single runway. Mohsen continued:

> They first opened fire on an Antonov transport and then hit a row of MiG-21s and a Dove. Then another Vautour hit one of two Hunters that returned from the attack on Lod IAP and were still parked near the runway. The resulting detonation caused injuries to several of our pilots, and 1st Lieutenant Najdat an-Naqeeb barely escaped the explosion of his aircraft.

As the Vautours pressed home, they came under repeated attack by the two MiG-21s, the pilots of which finally found targets



A group of pilots from No. 6 Squadron (second from the right is Jawadat an-Nakeeb) with one of their Hunters (serial number 622) in 1967. Although their superiors frequently mixed in politics (and some of them were sent into the June 1967 War almost 'straight out of prison'), they were reasonably well-trained and possessed experience from the war with the Kurds. They were confident fighters, and on 5 June their spirits were very high. (Jawadat an-Nakeeb)

Most Iraqi Hunter-pilots during the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War were very young and trained by British and Indian instructors (contrary to the usual belief that they were 'Pakistani-trained'). Here a group of them (standing in the background) are with four instructors of the Indian Air Force (frong row, seated). (via Ali Tobchi)

A Hunter F.Mk 59B (serial number 628 or 633) in front of a sandbag revetment covered by camouflage netting at Habbaniyah during the June 1967 War. Due to the temporary nature of the IrAF deployment to H-3, no such protective measures were introduced there. (Ahmad Sadik Collection

that were flying steady enough to be targeted with R-3S missiles. However, none of the four missiles they fired hit: all missed, since the Vautours were flying much too low and the missile seeker heads were distracted by the heat emitted by the hot desert below. The first air battle over H-3 therefore remained inconclusive.

The situation regarding the results of the Israeli attack on the parked IrAF aircraft was quite different. The IDF/AF pilots exaggerated by a considerable margin, Captain Magen claiming the destruction of between nine and 12 aircraft, and Lieutenant Ran no fewer than six MiG-21s, five Hunters, two MiG-17s and a 'large transport'.[88] Citing from an official IrAF report about this attack, Ahmad Sadik summarised:

> Our records were very specific and cited three MiG-21s, one Hunter, one Dove and a single An-12 (that was carrying R-3S air-to-air missiles and spare parts for MiG-21s) as destroyed. There were no MiG-17s at H-3: they did not deploy there during the June 1967 War. The runway was damaged but ground crews rapidly prepared an alternative and thus the airfield was operational by the next morning.[89]

Apparently, the Israeli commanders were not convinced by the reports filed by their pilots and drew similar conclusions to the IrAF. Thus, CO 1st Wing IDF/AF, Colonel Yezekiel Somech, subsequently received the order to fly another strike against H-3, on the morning of 7 June.[90] What the Israelis did not know - or did not expect - was that the IrAF planned to return the favour even earlier.

IRAQI COUNTERATTACK

By sunrise on 6 June, six Hunters from No. 6 Squadron IrAF - each armed with eight rockets with 60lb warheads and a full load of 30mm ammunition for their cannon - were prepared for their next combat sortie from H-3. Acting according to orders from UACEC HQ in Amman, Captain Suleimany distributed them into two formations, one of four and the other of two aircraft, of which the former was to attack Israeli ground units, while the other received the order to hit Ramat David air base, as Sadik recalled:

> The orders Suleimany received were very unclear and provided no useful details about the target, which was to be some Israeli

The wreckage of this de Havilland Dove (serial number 267) was discovered at the former Habbaniyah air base in March 2006. The aircraft likely ended its service still wearing the same colours as the example destroyed by the Israelis in the course of their first attack on H-3, on the afternoon of 5 June 1967. The IrAF acquired a total of seven Doves, which were flown by No. 3 Squadron. (Tom Cooper Collection)

> artillery position near Jenin. Contrary to the usual practice within the IrAF, there was no direct communication between No. 6 Squadron and Jordanian ground troops, and we had no forward observers deployed on the West Bank. We also still knew next to nothing about the importance of Ramat David air base.

The reason the IrAF did not send more fighters over Israel that morning was quite obvious. At that time, H-3 was only a small airfield with very primitive support facilities, expected to serve as a staging post for units underway to Jordan. It was already overburdened by the presence of a squadron each of Hunters and MiG-21s. Positioned in the middle of the barren, rocky desert between Baghdad and Damascus, and nearly 500km (311 miles) away from the Iraqi capital, it was also very isolated. As well as lighter and more sensitive items, such as weapons, the IrAF had to truck-in most supplies - including fuel and water - along the highway from its depots in the Baghdad area. The supply situation for Nos 6 and 17 Squadrons did not permit anything more substantial than offensive sorties by six Hunters and a CAP consisting of two MiG-21FLs.

The first formation of four Hunters lost one of its number early on, when the fighter, flown by an unknown pilot, had to return to H-3 due to mechanical problems. Underway at low level, the other three pilots reached the designated target area near Jenin by around 0500 Israeli time, completely undisturbed. Failing to find their target in the area expected, the three Iraqi pilots were quick to find an alternative. Faysal Abdul Mohsen flew as number 2 in this formation and recalled what happened next:

> Our formation consisted of Captain Mohammed Abdel Wahed Yuzbaki, myself and 1st Lieutenant Abdul Latif Abdul Karim. We hit a group of tanks parked in an open field next to the road from Nazareth to Haifa. Their u-shaped formation was surrounded by many cars and trucks and apparently in the process of loading ammunition and refuelling. It was nearly impossible to miss and all our rockets hit the target area, causing an impressive volume of radio chatter on the Zionist networks.

According to a post-war investigation by the IrAF Intelligence Department, this attack - not reported in any known Israeli account of the June 1967 War - apparently left five Israelis killed and eight injured, although the exact extent of the damage caused to various tanks and other vehicles remains unknown.[91]

Around the same time, another Iraqi jet appeared over the West Bank, having met as little resistance as the three Hunters that preceded it. This was one of four Tupolev Tu-16 bombers from No. 10 Squadron IrAF, that – each armed with six FAB-500 bombs – were ordered to attack Ramat David AB. Once again, the targeting intelligence provided to the crews involved was very poor. Furthermore, each bomber was to operate as a single-ship, without providing mutual protection with the help of their three defensive barbettes, each of which was equipped with two 23mm cannon, and without any fighter escort. Instead, one bomber was to follow the other at an interval of nearly an hour.

The first Tu-16 that reached Israel was piloted by Captain Farouk al-Tail, with 1st Lieutenant Majid Turki as co-pilot. It reached Mafraq air base flying at low altitude, then climbed to 25,000ft (7,620m) while crossing the Jordan River and searching for its target.[92] The crew reported to have found Ramat David and released its bombs without any disturbance, around 0505 local time. However, it seems that Captain al-Tail's report was overoptimistic and his crew released its bombs upon a military installation near Taamach, 10km (6.2 miles) south-east of Afula, where - according to Iraqi intelligence reports - several buildings were demolished, two Israeli soldiers killed and five injured.[93]

The next two Tu-16 crews were less lucky: both were forced to abort due to technical difficulties and return to Habbaniyah. The fourth Tu-16 was flown by Squadron Leader Hussein Mohammad 'Kaka' Hussein, with co-pilot Flight Lieutenant Alwan, navigators 1st Lieutenant Rashid and 1st Lieutenant Kargoli, as well as rear-gunner 1st Lieutenant Sabih. It missed Ramat David and continued climing over the Mediterranean, whereupon Hussein decided to turn around and try to find another suitable target. Around 0835 local time, for unexplained reasons and despite a clear order not to attack civilian targets, the crew released its warload over the centre of Netanya, hitting the main street and causing a number of civilian casualties.[94] Shortly after, Hussein's bomber was intercepted by two Mirage IIICJs from No. 117 Squadron. First Lieutenant Sabih opened fire with his two 23mm cannon, forcing them to break and reposition while Hussein entered a right turn and began a descent that finally brought him directly over Ramat David - just at the moment that the crews of the four No. 110 Squadron Vautours and two No.117 Squadron Mirage IIICJs were preparing for their second attack on H-3!

Still pursued by two Mirages, the Tupolev thundered low over the Israeli air base, making a right turn that enabled Sabih and Kargoli to open fire from their barbettes on the aircraft at the installations below. The bomber was then hit by one of two missiles fired by the Mirages: Hussein reported to H-3 over the radio that the aircraft was still controllable and that he was attempting to escape in an easterly direction. However, while trying to do so, he flew his bomber directly over the IDF barracks near Megiddo airfield, where the Tu-16 was apparently hit again, this time by the Mirage flown by Captain Amnon Arad and ground-based Bofors 40mm L/70 cannon. The bomber crashed into a military storage complex hidden within a pine forest west of Afula, destroying three barracks and two teams of 120mm mortars, and killing its entire crew as well as 11 or 14 Israeli reservist soldiers (sources differ) and injuring eight.[95]

Independently from Hussein's Tu-16, two Hunters also arrived over the Ramat David area. Flown by 1st Lieutenant Samir Yousif Zainal and 1st Lieutenant Wallid Abdul-Latif as-Samarrai, they reached their target by flying at low altitude and without encountering any kind of opposition. However, the results of their attack remain unknown: available Israeli sources mention only an air raid that apparently hit the villages of Nahalal and Migdal Haemek, though without causing any damage or casualties. Curiously enough, these locations are due north and east, respectively, of the

An Iraqi Tupolev Tu-16 bomber after the June 1967 War. Sent into attacks on Ramat David AB with insufficient intelligence and unprotected from Israeli interceptors and MIM-23 HAWK surface-to-air missiles, Iraqi Tu-16-crews could only use their speed and 23mm cannons installed in barbettes for self-defence. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

sprawling Ramat David complex, barely a few kilometres away.[96]

SECOND ATTEMPT FRUSTRATED

Shortly after Hussein's Tu-16 was shot down, and after Zainal and Samarrai had left Israeli airspace, the second Israeli attack on H-3 was launched in the form of four Vautours led by Major Moshe Sa'ar. The aircraft followed the same route as the first formation that attacked H-3, and the same as that used by all the Iraqi Hunters. The Israelis arrived over H-3 just as Zainal and Samarrai were about to land, covered by two MiG-21FLs – flown by Majors Khalid Sarah and Mumtazz Abdel Ali as-Saydoon (an ex-Hunter pilot who converted to MiGs in 1966) – and two Hunters, flown by Captain Yuzbaki and 1st Lieutenant Namiq Saadallah.

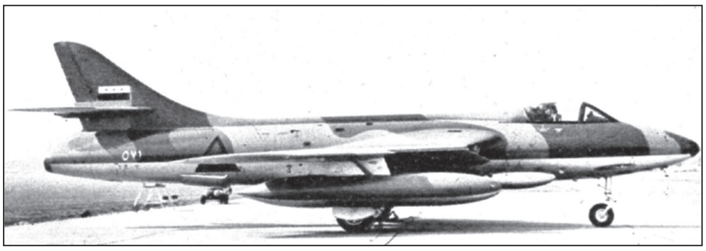
Already airborne and in the process of developing their attack, the Israelis proved quicker off the mark. Koren positioned behind Samarrai's Hunter and followed him down towards the runway, while Sa'ar turned to attack the two MiGs as these were accelerating for take-off. Barely within firing range of his target, Koren was surprised to see Samarrai tucking in his landing gear, braking and then accelerating away - avoiding the Israeli attack. Turning around, the leading Mirage then attempted to attack the two Hunters that were still on the runway. Under pressure to get airborne as soon as possible, Captain Yuzbaki made the fatal mistake of pulling too hard and too early on his stick: his Hunter stalled, yawed and then struck the main water tank of H-3. The pilot was killed instantly.

The Israelis all missed the three remaining IrAF fighters, which then managed to became airborne and engage the enemy in a somewhat confused air battle. Pulling his Hunter above the debris left by the detonation of Yuzbaki's jet, Saadallah first attacked the Vautour flown by Captain Zohar but was then counter-attacked by Koren - before the engine of the latter's Mirage stalled. Undisturbed, Saadallah proceeded with his attack on Zohar and claimed his target as 'damaged'. In turn, the Israeli claimed to have outmanoeuvred his opponent and then hit him with 30mm cannon fire: according to Zohar, the Hunter crashed seconds later. Saadallah's Hunter was indeed hit this time, and the pilot injured, but nobody had been shot down so far: Namik Saadallah managed to land safely back at H-3.[97]

Meanwhile, the two MiG-21s made a wide turn and then accelerated to attack the Israelis that now began to withdraw from H-3. This attack came just around the time Koren managed to recover his Mirage from a stall by dropping the nose of his fighter and relighting the engine. Sarah now attacked Zohar's Vautour as the latter was pulling up from a strafing pass. While doing so, he had to make several manoeuvres, as his MiG was armed only with R-3S missiles, which possessed a very narrow engagement envelope. Zohar spoiled Sarah's attack by turning west to escape in the direction of Israel, but the Iraqi major followed, in turn presenting his tail to Koren. The Israeli Mirage pilot subsequently claimed that a short burst from his cannon was sufficient to cut off the right wing and cause the Iraqi fighter to crash. In fact, several rounds hit Sarah's MiG-21FL, one of which caused his braking parachute to pop open, in turn confusing his Israeli opponent. However, the next turn and subsequent acceleration of the MiG caused the parachute to break away and Sarah managed to land safely. The Israeli formation then hurriedly disengaged and disappeared in a westerly direction. The second Iraqi MiG-21 attempted to pursue one of the Vautours but both of his R-3S missed, Major as-Saydoon later bitterly complaining about the poor quality of the Soviet-made missiles.

Back at Ramat David, Zohar, Koren and the other Israeli pilots rather optimistically claimed the destruction of two MiG-21s and six Hunters on the ground, as well as a MiG-21 and Hunter in air combats. Once again, the IDF leadership was unconvinced: this raid was nothing short of chaotic, with the sole result of one Iraqi Hunter crashing on take-off and two other IrAF fighters damaged in the air. A third attack was thus ordered for the morning of 7 June. Once again, Colonel Somech was to fly the mission.

Captain Abdel Wahed Yuzbaki, veteran of the Kfar Sirkin raid, was killed while scrambling from H-3 airfield when it came under a second Israeli attack on the morning of 6 June 1967. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)



Hunters – like this F.Mk 59 serial number 581 of the IrAF – were not only good-looking, but resilient too: in the course of the second air battle over H-3, the Hunter flown by 1st Lieutenant Namiq Saadallah received several hits, some of which injured the pilot. Nevertheless, Saadallah landed his Hunter safely, and both were to see much more action against the Israelis in 1973. (David Nicolle Collection)

JORDANIAN CONTINGENT

For the Israelis, the action did not end there: following their rather hasty departure from Iraq, they flew along the Baghdad-Amman highway, where they sighted a large column of military vehicles. These they identified as belonging to the Iraqi 8th Brigade, sent as an expeditionary force to the Jordanian front. Unchallenged in the air, the Vautour pilots vented their frustration by exhausting their remaining ammunition with random strafing. In fact, the convoy they hit consisted of Jordanian vehicles, underway in the opposite direction towards Iraq. It also included buses carrying the surviving RJAF Hunter pilots. Nasri Jumean explained how this came about:

> On the evening of 5 June, we gathered at the HQ in Amman. There we met King Hussein twice and then the PAF Assistant Chief of Staff (Operations), Air Commodore Ahmad Rahim Khan, who was visiting Jordan at the time. The second visit of his Majesty, around 2200, boosted our morale considerably. He told us that he had contacted our brothers in Iraq and that we were to go to H-3 and continue the fight. I would be in command of that detachment, consisting of Jihad, George, Jasser, Samir, Farouq, Smadi, Shiab, Ihsan, Saif and another Pakistani. Several engineering officers joined us in the bus that was to bring us to H-3.

Around midnight, a convoy of buses with Jordanian personnel was on its way from Amman to Iraq. After driving the entire night, early in the morning, while approaching H-4 in eastern Jordan, the column met a convoy of the Iraqi 8th Brigade. Jumean continued:

> Underway towards the east we met an Iraqi brigade and its commander asked us what was happening. I replied that we didn’t know much. He told us that H-3 had been hit the previous day, but was still operational. At 0830 two Vautours and two Mirages buzzed our column. I told the Iraqis to disperse their people and vehicles, as the aircraft would certainly come back. Fifteen minutes later they did come back and strafed.

Meanwhile, Colonel Hamid Sha’ban at-Tikriti, CO Hunter Wing at Habbaniyah, arrived at H-3 in a two-seat Hunter to find his pilots excited and exhausted from battles with the Israelis. He was also confronted by a number of damaged and destroyed aircraft parked around, and the main runway still undergoing repairs. With insufficient equipment and installations to hand, Sha’ban ordered all the remaining Hunters and MiGs to be evacuated back to Habbaniyah.

One of the vehicles from the Jordanian column broke down and thus one group of RJAF pilots - including Nasri Jumean - arrived first, and put themselves at the disposal of Colonel Sha’ban. The Iraqi could not do much for them, as Jumean recalled:

> When we reached H-3, it was smoke and chaos. Colonel Hameed told us he had got no aircraft and no station and we should continue to Habbaniyah.

Jasser Zayyad arrived with the second Jordanian group, several hours later, by which time Sha’ban had managed to bring the situation under control:

> The Iraqis lost one pilot and a few aircraft at H-3 but they repaired the damage quickly. We had a lunch and were then told to go to Habbaniyah. Our bus broke down and we got on a lorry. We had only flying overalls on and it was a very cold drive to the old quarters.

The first group - including Saif-ul-Azam - reached Habbaniyah around 2100 on 6 June, tired, hungry and thirsty. At first, nobody knew what to do with them. But then King Hussein of Jordan phoned Iraqi President Arif, finally informing him that he had sent his pilots to Iraq and hoping they could join the IrAF in the fight against Israel.[98] Agreeing to arrange for their attachment to No. 6 Squadron IrAF, President Arif issued corresponding orders directly to Colonel Sha’ban. Finally, arrangements were made for their housing and a dinner was served. The second group of Jordanian pilots, including Jumean, arrived at Habbaniyah only around 0300 on 7 June, as he recalled:

> Everybody went straight to bed, but half an hour later, we were woken and told to go to the Operations Centre. The Iraqis told us they wanted to stop the Israelis from taking Jordan and that we had 50 Hunters at our disposal, because there were only two Iraqi pilots there. The others were to arrive during the day, after evacuating other aircraft out of Israeli reach … Eventually, we decided to organise ourselves into two formations of four aircraft, the first consisting of Jihad, Farouq and two Iraqis, and the second of Nasri, Ihsan, Saif and George.

Zayyad recalled similarly:

> We went to the old quarters. I took off my boots, swept the bugs off the bed and fell asleep … At 0300 in the morning [sic] I heard a commotion outside and got up. I saw the Iraqis going to the squadron ready room and followed them, but could not eat breakfast. I was the only Jordanian around. The Iraqi squadron commander told me not to fly. However, around 0630 the Iraqi that was going to fly the CAP over H-3 said he had a bad stomach so I was assigned to fly with an Iraqi as number 2. I asked the Iraqis for a map, but there was none so I took one off the wall.

The morning of 7 June thus began with more than a little chaos at Habbaniyah.

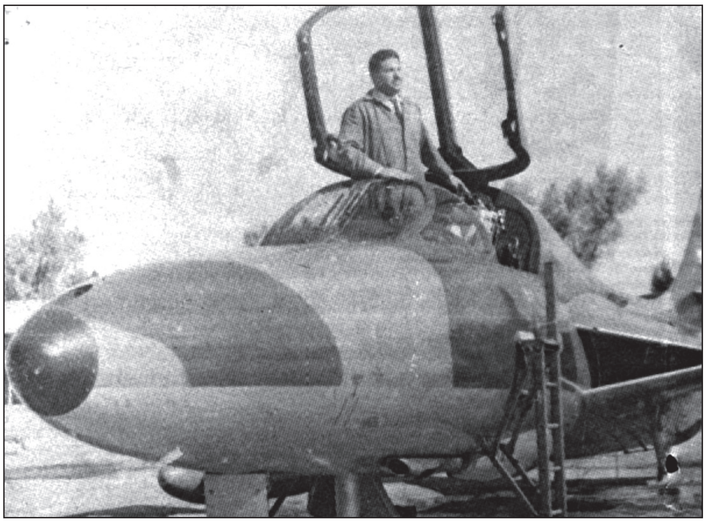
DISASTROUS THIRD RAID

Around 0700 on 7 June, Jasser Zayyad launched from Habbaniyah as leader of a quartet of IrAF Hunters:

> Underway towards H-3 I wanted to check my Iraqi number 2 and I told him to attack me. He was so poor in air combat manoeuvring, I was quickly behind him and he could not shake me off. It was obvious that this guy was not trained and this made me very nervous. By the time we came back to Habbaniyah, other Jordanians were around as well and it was decided that we would lead the sections.

Around 1015, it was the turn of the next division of four Hunters to take off for their patrol over H-3. This formation was led by Flight Lieutenant Saif-ul-Azam, with 1st Lieutenant Ihsan Shurdom as number 2. The combat-experienced Iraqi 1st Lieutenant Samir Yousif Zainal was to fly as number 3, with youngster 1st Lieutenant Galeb al-Hameed al-Qaysee as number 4. Jumean recounted the original plan for this mission:

> They were to patrol H-3, then land and refuel there, fly another



Colonel Hamid Sha'ban at-Tikriti was the CO Habbaniyah air base and in overall charge of operations from H-3 during the June 1967 War with Israel. He subsequently enjoyed a very successful career with the IrAF, becoming the C-in-C on two occasions. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

CAP and then return to Habbaniyah.

As the Hunters approached H-3, Iraqi Army units moving along the highway between Baghdad and Damascus called HQ at Habbaniyah to report a formation of eight Israeli fighters underway at low level, heading east. Immediately, Colonel Sha'ban made a call to his deputy, who was still at H-3, to warn him about the enemy. Jumean continued:

> The base commander climbed on to the roof of an old fortress near the airfield. Using his eyes, telephone and radio, he then directed the incoming Hunters. He was fantastic: had just been let out of jail and went straight to command the base.

Azam's division was thus alerted to the incoming Israeli raid in a timely fashion and ordered to engage.

Calculating that all previous Iraqi air raids were launched from H-3, Colonel Somech elected to shut down this airfield once and for all. Despite previous negative experiences, and the high probability of aerial opposition, it is surprising that this mission was as poorly planned: the attack formation was to use the same ingress route as before; the Vautours were to go in at low level, but instead of providing top cover, the escorting four Mirages were also to be armed with bombs and were ordered to hit the runway first. It seems the Israelis expected to surprise the Iraqis again. Taking off at 1022, Captains Shlomo Keren and Alexander Inbar led the formation in Vautour IIN serial number 65, with Colonel Somech as number 2 in Vautour IIA serial number 17, Captain Yitzhak Glantz-Golan as number 3 in Vautour IIA serial number 14 and Lieutenant Avshalom Friedman in Vautour IIA serial number 03 as number 4. Captain Ezra Dotan, Captain Gideon Dror, Lieutenant David Porat and Lieutenant Reuven Har'el flew the escorting No. 117 Squadron Mirages.

The Israeli formation appeared over H-3 at low altitude around the same time that four Hunters approached to only some 10km (6.2 miles) from the airfield, on directly the opposite side and at high altitude. A major air battle was now inevitable. Advised of the Israelis' appearance by the Iraqi base commander on the ground, Saif-ul-Azam dived towards the enemy, ordering his formation members to arm their guns and jettison their drop tanks in the process. The Pakistani and his Jordanian wingman manoeuvred behind two Vautours, while the two Iraqis attacked two Mirages, jumping them only seconds after Captain Dror had dropped his two bombs on the H-3 runway. Pulling up, Dror noticed two Hunters behind the rear pair of Mirages, and turned to attack. Still in a dive, Azam decided to cross over his formation: he and Shourdom were now to attack the Mirages, while Zainal and al-Qaysee were to attack the Vautours.

The Mirages were faster: Dror closed upon the rear Iraqi pair and opened fire first, hitting Qaysee's Hunter. Spinning out of control, the aircraft crashed into a fuel tank, instantly killing the pilot. Undaunted, Azam attacked the same Mirage, his 30mm shells causing a big ball of flame to appear at the rear end of the Israeli fighter. When the controls went dead, Dror ejected. He was taken prisoner by Iraqi troops only minutes later. In return, Ezra Dothan attacked one of the Hunters behind Dror, claiming it as shot down seconds later. However, his effort was in vain: not only did his target escape undamaged, but the Israelis were now about to receive a series of return blows.

Breaking off to the right without looking back at his first target, Azam spotted a Vautour approaching head on, but below his flight level:

> I had just shot down a Mirage III in flames and came across a Vautour closing head-on, 2,000ft [610m] below me … I inverted the Hunter and pulled through a split-S. I pulled back on the stick to the point of blacking out, and on levelling found myself within 150ft [46m] of the Vautour, and again closing fast in spite of the fully extended airbrakes and throttle at idle. Only on this occasion I did not hesitate and fired a burst with the immensely powerful 30mm cannon. Simultaneously, I broke hard to the left. There was a violent shudder right across the aircraft. I was hit by flying debris from the exploding Vautour.

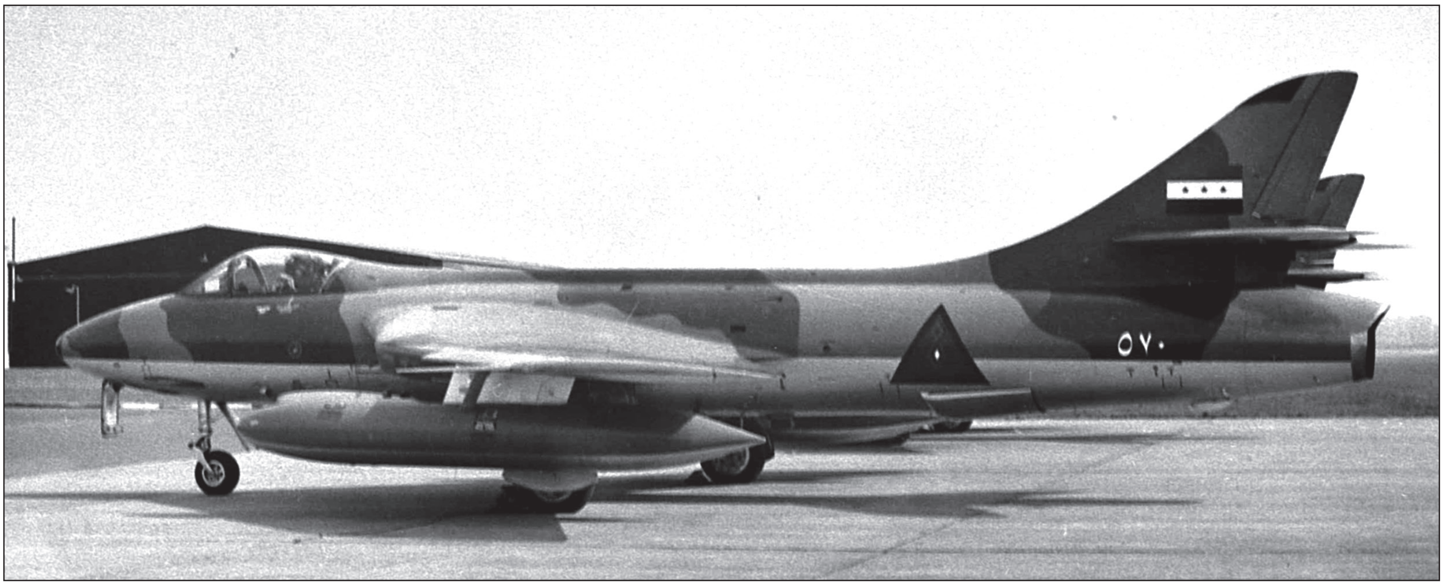
Meanwhile, 1st Lieutenant Zainal also positioned himself behind a Vautour, recalling in his post-mission report:

> The big Israeli fighter did several shallow manoeuvres, avoiding three bursts from my cannon, but then steadied on a western course. I carefully positioned the target in my crosshairs and then fired for the fourth time, hitting the wing and fuselage. Pouring smoke, the Israeli plane pulled up and two ejection seats separated from it: in that moment the empty plane exploded.[99]

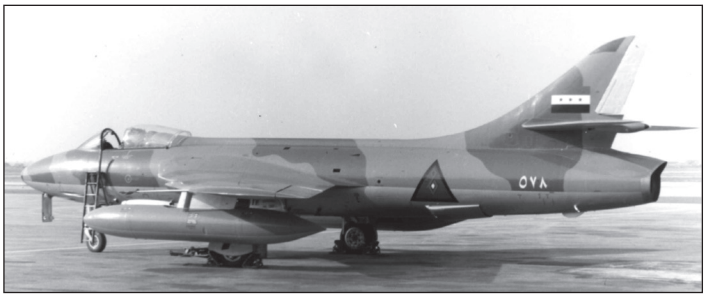
Whether shot down by Azam or Zainal, Captain Glantz-Golan ejected from one of the two disintegrating Vautours to become the second Israeli POW in Iraq. Indeed, this series of clashes occurred within such a short period of time that Dror and Golan ejected almost simultaneously, Dror ironically still 'escorting' Golan as they descended towards the ground under their parachutes!

With his formation leader and one of the escorting Mirages shot down, and at least one other aircraft on fire, Somech finally ordered the survivors to disengage immediately. However, they were given no respite. Zainal attacked both remaining Vautours and then a Mirage, claiming hits on all of them. According to his post-mission report, at least two Israeli aircraft were last seen trailing smoke when the Iraqi disengaged upon realising he was already well inside Jordanian airspace and very short on fuel.[100] Back over H-3, Saif-ul-Azam decided to return to Habbaniyah, which he reached safely, even though on his last drops of fuel:

> On landing I saw a large piece of debris from the Vautour



A beautiful study of the Hunter F.Mk 59 serial number 570, prior to its March 1964 delivery. After being flown by Saif-ul-Azam during the third air battle over H-3, on 7 June 1967, this aircraft was to enjoy a very long and distinguished career with the IrAF, surviving combat sorties in no fewer than five wars and service with the IrAF's jet display team. (David Nicolle Collection)



Pre-delivery photograph of the Hunter F.Mk 59 with serial number 578, pointing out the handsome lines of this type. According to Iraqi records, Ihsan Shurdom flew this aircraft during his sortie over H-3 airfield on 7 June 1967. (David Nicolle Collection):

> embedded in the fuselage. An amusing story went around Habbaniyah, 'The Pakistani, when running out of ammunition, rammed the enemy aircraft and brought it down.'

On the way to Habbaniyah, Ihsan Shurdom fell back behind Azam:

> I could not find Habbaniyah and landed at a small airstrip on a plateau nearby with only 50lb [23kg] left in my fuel tanks.

His Hunter was only slightly damaged on landing. Swiftly repaired and refuelled by a party of IrAF ground technicians, Shurdom was able fly the fighter back to Habbaniyah.

Following his pursuit of the Israelis deep over Jordan, 1st Lieutenant Zainal was so short of fuel that he was forced to land at H-3, despite new damage on the runway. He rejoined his unit in Habbaniyah slightly over an hour later.

The IrAF remained active over western Iraq during the day, sending additional CAPs out of Habbaniyah throughout the afternoon and also launching pairs of Hunters over Jordan, as recalled by Mohsen:

1st Lieutenant Galeb al-Hameed al-Qaysee was another veteran of the Kfar Sirkin raid. He was killed when his Hunter was hit by Dror and it crashed into a fuel tank at H-3, during the third Israeli attack. (Ahmad Sadik Collection)

> I flew two missions that brought me over Jordan that day. One with Jassam Mohammed Juburi and the other with the Jordanian pilot George Matta. The second mission was in support of the Iraqi Army brigade that was still underway towards Amman. We saw smoke columns caused by Israeli air raids against our ground troops but encountered no opposition and returned to Habbaniyah safely.

On 8 June, four Jordanians were sent from Habbaniyah to Rashid air base, where they met Colonel Sha'ban again.[101] Nasri Jumean recalled one of the worst injustices suffered by any Arab pilot in the course of the June 1967 War or immediately after:

> Sha'ban informed us that the Israelis had taken the Golan and were going for Damascus. He wanted four aircraft to launch and hit the advancing Israeli ground units. I told him, 'You want four aircraft - what can they do?' But he insisted and thus we prepared ourselves. On the order from Colonel Sha'ban, all

> rocket launchers were taken off our Hunters, to make us lighter. Meanwhile, we calculated a flight plan and found out we could reach the Golan but not get back. I told this to Colonel Sha'ban, but he continued insisting. Thus, we decided to try and land at Dawson's Field or bail out. Then Sha'ban told us to stand down: the war was over.
>
> Eventually, the story came out that we had refused orders, but we did not know what kind of repercussions this might have … We remained in Iraq until 17 June and then returned to Amman, requesting an inquiry. The next day, we - including George, Jihad, Issa Qandah, Raja Abu Zeineh, Nasser Sa'adi, Radi Monomy and me - met Sharif Nasser bin Jamil at GHQ. We expected to get decorated for our efforts. Instead, Raouf Abdeen, Chief of Legal Affairs, appeared to say that four of us were up for trial and four for interview. He said, 'Major Jumean, effective from this moment you are released from the Air Force and on pension. George, Nasser and Raja, you are released from the Air Force. Your services are not needed.' Others received minor punishment. We were marched out without being allowed to say a word and do not know the reason for our release until this very day.

The Israeli pilots involved were far luckier. On the evening of 8 June, after their Intelligence had intercepted an Iraqi radio message erroneously reporting that three IDF/AF pilots had been captured, they were sent over Iraq again. A Noratlas transport configured as a communications relay platform, and supported by three Super Frelon helicopters, was launched in a search and rescue attempt the same evening. Failing to find any of the downed crews, the aircraft eventually attracted the attention of Syrian air defences and came under attack from a MiG-21. The Israelis then beat a hasty retreat.[102]

BEANCOUNTING

What exactly happened over H-3 shortly before noon on 7 June 1967 remains partially unclear. Except for the fate of 1st Lieutenant Galeb al-Hameed al-Qaysee, who was killed, and the fact that Dror and Glantz-Golan were captured almost immediately after landing under their parachutes, the remainder of the action remains uncertain.

Flight Lieutenant Saif-ul-Azam claimed one Mirage and a Vautour shot down, and his recollections are described above. He was subsequently officially credited with two kills and was highly decorated by the Iraqi government.[103] 1st Lieutenant Samir Yousif Zainal claimed a Vautour and a Mirage (in that order), and was similarly credited with two kills and highly decorated. Finally, 1st Lieutenant Ihsan Shurdom claimed a Mirage and a Vautour that exploded, while the sole 100mm AAA battery deployed at H-3 claimed another Israeli fighter as shot down. Shurdom's conclusion is as follows:

> We arrived at 20,000ft [6,096m] over H-3, jettisoned drop tanks and then engaged. Farouq Abdeen was down on the ground and watched all of this. I shot down a Mirage and the pilot bailed out. Then I shot down a Vautour, which exploded. Then my guns jammed. Saif meanwhile shot down a Mirage that hit an Iraqi pilot who then went straight into the fuel tank. Then Saif shot down a Vautour too.[104]

Other Iraqis and Jordanians who were at Habbaniyah to hear the post-mission reports recalled the events somewhat differently - with, notably, lower Israeli losses. Faysal Abdul Mohsen explained:

> Ihsan Shurdom felled a Mirage flown by a pilot named Ezra, who was killed, and damaged another Israeli plane. Saif-ul-Azam shot down a Mirage, the pilot of which was captured: he was of Romanian descent. Our pilot Samir Zainal shot down a Vautour of the Israeli formation leader and killed him and his navigator.

Recollections of Jordanian pilots that were in Iraq at the time tend to confirm Mohsen's version. Nasri Jumean said:

> The Iraqi pair bounced the Vautours but the Iraqi number 2 was caught by a Mirage and crashed. This Mirage was then shot down by Saif. The second Iraqi then shot down a Vautour and a Mirage, and another Israeli was shot down by the AAA.

Jasser Zayyad recalled the events differently:

> Saif got one, Ihsan got one and Samir Zainal got one.

The reason the IrAF eventually concluded that claims by all three pilots were 'correct' is likely to come as a surprise to almost anyone familiar with Israeli accounts published so far: evidence collected by the Iraqi military after the air battle. During the afternoon, an Iraqi Army patrol found the wreckage of a third Israeli fighter - they described it as a Mirage - not far from H-3. The aircraft was completely destroyed and the pilot dead: according to IrAF reports, his body was still strapped to his ejection seat, which had not separated in time, and was nearly completely burned. What was left of his papers showed that he held the rank of a major and that his first name was Ezra - the same name as recalled by Mohsen.[105]

Later on 7 June, Saudi border guards called Habbaniyah to report finding wreckage of an Israeli Vautour, together with the bodies of pilots identified as 'Captain Keren' and 'Captain Meltzer'. Keren's body was still inside the cockpit, while Meltzer's was found several hundred metres away: he had obviously been fatally injured in an unsuccessful ejection attempt from less than the 600m (1,969ft) minimum safe altitude.

For the IrAF at least, the situation was thus 'crystal clear': its Hunters had shot down five Israeli fighters in combat on 7 June, with three Israelis being killed in the process, while two were captured alive.

Exactly who this 'second Ezra' was remains unknown, since the Iraqis were left with insufficient time to find out. Immediately after the ceasefire with Jordan, Israel began exerting fierce pressure upon King Hussein for the return or release of its pilots - dead or alive - from Iraq, and also demanded their return via the International Red Cross. Dror and Glantz-Golan, as well as the bodies of three Israeli pilots, were exchanged for Jordanian POWs as early as 26 June 1967.[106] Clearly, the 'unknown Ezra' could not have been Ezra Dothan: although his Mirage IIICJ was attacked and damaged by a Syrian MiG-21 during the flight back to Israel, he is known to have made it back to Israel and to have continued his career with the IDF/AF after the war. All available Israeli publications about this air battle only mention the loss of three aircraft - one Mirage and two Vautours - during the third attack on H-3. According to these accounts, Dror flew the Mirage serial number 60 and Glantz-Golan the Vautour IIA serial number 14. The Vautour IIN serial number 65, found inside Saudi Arabia, had been flown by the formation leader, Captain Shlomo Keren, with navigator Captain Alexander Inbar. The name 'Meltzer' reported by the Saudis was the Hebrew family name of Captain Inbar (something all the interviewed Iraqis deny until this day, questioning why there should be any difference, since

In the course of only two missions flown on 5 and 7 June 1967, Saif-ul-Azam (left) and Ihsan Shurdom claimed a total of five Israeli fighters shot down. (Saif-ul-Azam Collection

Saif-ul-Azam was highly decorated for his achievements during the June 1967 War with Israel. He is seen together with Iraqi President Arif, while receiving one of the highest Iraqi decorations for valour. (Saif-ul-Azam Collection)

Dror (left) and Glantz-Golan as POWs in Iraq. (Ahmad Sadik Collection) both names are Hebrew). Therefore, according to Israeli sources, no fourth or fifth IDF/AF fighter was ever shot down over H-3 on 7 June 1967. The exception to this rule was an article published in the Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz on 24 December 2005, citing for the first time in 38 years that, 'Israel suffered a loss of three pilots killed and two captured' during the third raid on H-3. Whether a mistake or an unintended revelation, this statement was never retracted.

Whatever the truth, the third battle over H-3 was all but over by 1135 on 7 June 1967, and it ended with a clear Israeli defeat.

7

POST-SCRIPTUM

Providing a complete summary of the operational history of Hawker Hunters in service with the Iraqi Air Force in the period between 1958 and 1967, based on official records, is presently impossible. The official IrAF Archive was largely destroyed during the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. Whatever documentation survived was taken by the US military and is kept locked away.[107] Documentation from British and private Iraqi sources enables the following summary of Iraqi Hunter purchases: after acquiring 16 Hunter F.Mk 6s in 1957 (15 of these were delivered in early 1958), the IrAF ordered 24 aircraft upgraded to FGA.Mk 9 standard, and delivered under the designation F.Mk 59 by May 1965. While the work on these Hunters was still going on, the IrAF placed another order for 18 aircraft converted to the same standard. Designated F.Mk 59A, the last of these reached Iraq only in April 1967. In the meantime, four additional aircraft were ordered to replace losses through attrition: designated F.Mk 59B, these were received by Iraq in September 1966. With this, Iraq received a total of 46 single-seat Hunters. Iraq has also purchased two-seaters. After leasing two two-seat T.Mk 66s in 1963, Iraq placed an order for three T.Mk 69s, and these were delivered the following year. Details about all 51 Hunters that ever served with the IrAF are provided in Table 6 overleaf.

Because during the period 1931-1988 serial numbers of IrAF aircraft were applied in order of their delivery, IrAF Hunters received serials in several different batches. Furthermore, because midway through deliveries of F.Mk.59As Iraq purchased 19 or 20 MiG-21FLs from the USSR, the last 14 Hunters acquired by Baghdad had to re reserialed upon their arrival. Even so, it seems that the last Hunter ever delivered to the IrAF – serial number 702 – still received a serial known to have also been worn by a Soviet-delivered MiG-21: whether for this or another reason, the aircraft in question was broken up for spares almost immediately upon delivery.[108]

Generally, IrAF Hunters did not wear any unit or other kind of special insignia. Nevertheless, noses and fins of at least two aircraft that participated in the battle of 7 June – serial numbers 570 and 585 – were painted in red, and at least the Hunter with serial number 570 is certain to have received two kill markings and a small Arabic title below the right side of the cockpit.

Except for one pre-delivery loss during work-ups in the UK, only one fatal accident of an IrAF Hunter and only one combat loss are known to have occurred prior to June 1967 (see Table 8 overleaf for details).

While next to no details about participation of IrAF Hunters in the wars against the Kurds of the early 1960s are known, information available about their operations during the June 1967 War with Israel indicates that they flew 14 offensive sorties. Only four of these are known to have reached their intended targets: one aircraft aborted, while others engaged alternative objectives. No Iraqi Hunters were lost over Israel or Jordan.

Defensive operations were much more intense: many of the IrAF pilots (and, later on, RJAF pilots) flew at least two, often three CAPs over H-3 between 5-9 June 1967. In the course of these operations, the Iraqis suffered the loss of one Hunter that crashed on take-off and a second that was shot down by Israeli fighters. Both pilots of these aircraft were killed. A third Hunter was destroyed by the Israelis on the ground (and its pilot injured while climbing out of his aircraft).

In return, pilots flying IrAF Hunters claimed and were officially credited with at least five confirmed kills, three of which are usually confirmed by the Israelis too. Correspondingly, IrAF Hunters certainly scored a positive, 3:1 win/loss ratio in air combats with Israeli fighters during the period covered in this book.

Known commanders of IrAF Hunter-squadrons between 1958 and 1968 are listed in Table 5 overleaf, while known attrition of Iraqi and Jordanian Hunters is provided in Table 8 overleaf.

A summary of the operational history of Hunters operated by the Royal Jordanian Air Force between 1958 and June 1967 is much shorter. Jordan is known to have purchased 29 Hunters and temporarily operated one on loan during this period. Details about specific aircraft can be found in Table 7 overleaf. Six of these are known to have been written off before 1967. However, according to Jordanian sources, the RJAF should have had only 19 Hunters left at Mafraq AB, 18 of which were operational, as of the morning of 5 June 1967, while two others were undergoing overhauls and upgrades in the UK. This leaves the fate of two aircraft unknown (in comparison, according to official Israeli sources, there were no less than 27 Hunters in Jordan as of 5 June 1967, 21 of which were claimed as destroyed on the ground).[109]

During their first clashes with the IDF/AF, in 1964 and 1966, the RJAF credited its Hunter-pilots with four confirmed kills and two damaged, while losing one Hunter and its pilot. In comparison, the Israelis admitted only one loss, supposedly caused by fuel starvation. During their short participation in the June 1967 War with Israel, Jordanian Hunters are known to have flown at least three, and possibly seven offensive sorties, and either three or seven top-cover sorties. Their pilots claimed three enemy fighters shot down in air combats over Jordan, of which the Israelis confirmed one loss. In return, one Hunter was shot down by Israeli fighters, its pilot ejecting safely. One RJAF Hunter pilot was killed on the ground during the first Israeli attack on Mafraq AB.

Finally, Jordanian pilots (and one Pakistani seconded to the RJAF) flew around 20 CAPs over Iraq between 7-10 June, and their pilots claimed four kills (of which the Israelis confirmed three) without any losses while there.

A cross-examination of all presently available information shows that in all air battles with Israeli jet fighters between 1964 and 1967, Jordanian Hunters scored a 2:2 win/loss ratio. Their known attrition is listed – together with that of IrAF Hunters – in Table 8 overleaf.

The ceasefire that ended the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War also ended the first phase in operational service of Hawker Hunters in Iraq and Jordan. However, Hunters of the IrAF and RJAF were to see much more action during the following years. That story is to be told some other time.

Table 5: Known Commanding Officers of IrAF Hunter Squadrons, 1958-1968

Unit	Rank & Name	Timeframe
No. 6 Squadron	Major Arif Abd ar-Razzaq	15 June 1955 – 16 July 1958
	Major Mufid Said	16 July 1958 - 3 October 1958
	Major Nimma Abdullah ad-Dulaymi	8 February 1959 – 20 August 1959
	Major Hamid Sha'aban at-Tikriti	26 August 1959 – 27 October 1963
	Major Fuhim Jalal	3 November 1963 – 22 December 1963
	Major Mumtaz Abdel Ali as-Saydoon	15 January 1964 – 28 September 1965
	Lieutenant Colonel Adil Suleimani	3 November 1965 – 21 May 1968
No. 29 Squadron	Major Ismail Wakti	18 November 1966 – 17 September 1967
	Lieutenant Colonel Mohammed Jassam	17 September 1967 – 5 October 1968

Table 6: Iraqi Hunters, 1957-1967

Variant	Original identity	IrAF serial number	Remarks
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XJ677	394	delivered 25 January 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XJ678	395	delivered 10 January 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XJ679	396	delivered 17 January 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XJ681	397	delivered 24 January 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XJ682	398	delivered 16 January 1958
F.Mk 6	?	399	crashed 20 November 1956
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK143	400	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK144	401	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK145	402	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK146	403	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK147	404	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK152	405	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK153	406	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK154	407	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK155	408	delivered 19 December 1957
F.Mk 6	ex-RAF XK156	409	delivered 19 December 1957
T.Mk 66	ex-BAF IF19	567	leased in 1963, sold to Hawker in 1967
T.Mk 66A	ex-BAF IF67	567 (2nd)	leased in 1963, sold to Hawker in 1967
T.Mk 69	ex-BAF IF84	567 (3rd)	Contract No. HSA/63/I/054; delivered 24 February 1965
T.Mk 69	ex-BAF IF68	568	delivered 22 April 1964
T.Mk 69	ex-BAF IF143	569	delivered 14 May 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF6	570	Contract No. HSA/63/1/060; delivered 18 March 1964; credited with 2 kills on 7 June 1967
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF48	571	delivered 18 March 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF14	572	delivered 22 April 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF28	573	delivered 22 April 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF21	574	delivered 14 May 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF27	575	delivered 14 May 1964; credited with 2 kills on 7 June 1967
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF140	576	delivered 24 June 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF24	577	delivered 24 June 1964

F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF88	578	delivered 27 August 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF122	579	delivered 27 August 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF07	580	delivered 12 October 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF51	581	delivered 12 October 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF142	582	delivered 2 December 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF32	583	delivered 26 November 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF0	584	delivered 26 November 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF126	585	delivered 2 December 1964; credited with 1 kill on 7 June 1967
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF114	586	delivered 17 December 1964
F.Mk 59	ex-BAF IF75	587	delivered 14 January 1965
T.Mk 69	ex-BAF IF97	626	Contract No. HSA/65/I/062; delivered 17 January 1965
T.Mk 69	ex-BAF IF20	627	delivered 17 December 1964
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF79	628	delivered 14 January 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF94	629	delivered 23 February 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF80	630	delivered 13 April 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF11	631	delivered 13 Apri 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-KLu N-234	632	delivered 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-KLu N-247	633	delivered 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-KLu N-253	657	delivered 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-KLu N-255	658	delivered 1965
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF22	659	delivered 10 January 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF8	660	delivered 10 January 1966, used as FR.Mk 10
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF9	661	delivered 16 May 1966, used as FR.Mk 10
F.Mk 59B	ex-KLu N-221	662	Contract No. HSA/65/I/062A; delivered September 1966
F.Mk 59B	ex-KLu N-205	663	delivered September 1966
F.Mk 59B	ex-KLu N-259	664	delivered September 1966, used as FR.Mk 10
F.Mk 59B	ex-KLu N-263	689 (ex-667)	delivered September 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF71	690 (ex-668)	delivered 8 September 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF87	691 (ex-669)	balance of Contract No. HSA/65/I/062; delivered 13 October 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF54	692 (ex-670)	delivered 13 October 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF25	693	delivered 14 November 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF135	694 (ex-672)	delivered 14 November 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF74	695 (ex-673)	delivered 8 December 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF31	696 (ex-674)	delivered 8 December 1966
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF59	697 (ex-675)	delivered 10 January 1967
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF93	698 (ex-676)	delivered 10 January 1967
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF99	699 (ex-677)	delivered 15 March 1967
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF72	700 (ex-678)	delivered 15 March 1967
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF138	701 (ex-679)	delivered 13 May 1967
F.Mk 59A	ex-BAF IF49	702 (ex-680)	delivered 13 May 1967

Table 7: Jordanian Hunters, 1958-1967

Variant	Original identity	RJAF serial number	Remarks
F.Mk 6	XE551	700/A	Delivered 7 November 1958; destroyed on the ground, 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XE558	701/B	Delivered 1 November 1958; crashed 1 July 1960 due to pilot error
F.Mk 6	XF381	702/C	Delivered 11 November 1958; flown by Flight Lieutenant Saif-ul Azam, 1 June 1967; destroyed on ground at Amman IAP, 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF373	703/D	Delivered 7 November 1958; crashed April 1965
F.Mk 6	XF498	704/E	Delivered 12 November 1958; destroyed on ground, 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF444	705/F	Delivered 14 November 1958; destroyed on ground, 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF496	706/G	Delivered 12 November 1958; destroyed on ground, 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XE543	707/H	Delivered 12 November 1958; crashed September 1962 due to pilot error
F.Mk 6	XF452	708/J	Delivered 12 November 1958; upgraded to F.Mk 73 standard; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF379	709/K	Delivered 11 October 1958; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF380	710/L	Delivered 10 November 1958; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	WW597	711/M	Probably the aircraft that crashed before delivery
F.Mk 6	WW507	712/N	Delivered 11 December 1958; flown by Ihsan Shurdom on 14 November 1966; fate unknown
T.Mk 66B	-	714/P	Delivered 4 July 1960; crashed 15 August 1965
T.Mk 66B	XG231	715	Delivered 19 April 1966; probably destroyed 5 June 1967
T.Mk 66B	N-249	716	Delivered 7 October 1966; survived 1967 and donated to Oman in 1975; fate unknown
F.Mk 6	XG159	717	Delivered 17 April 1967; destroyed on ground, 5 June 1967
T.Mk 66B	N-283	801/A	Delivered 1962; fate unknown
F.Mk 6	XF415	802/B	Delivered 9 August 1962; fate unknown
F.Mk 6	XF423	803	Delivered 1962; crashed 5 July 1962
F.Mk 6	XG132	804/E	Delivered June 1962; flown to Egypt by defecting pilot, 1962; returned to Jordan; survived 1967 and donated to Oman in 1975
F.Mk 6	XG263	805/F	Delivered June 1962; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XG268	806/G	Delivered June 1962; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XG269	807/H	Delivered 31 July 1962; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XG171	808/?	Delivered 9 October 1962; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF518	809/K	Delivered 11 September 1962; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XF417	810/L	Delivered 3 October 1962; flown to Egypt by defecting pilot, 1962; returned to Jordan; probably destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XG187	811/M	Delivered 9 October 1962; destroyed 5 June 1967
F.Mk 6	XG257	812/N	Delivered 9 October 1962; fate unknown
T.Mk 66A	G-APUX	800/P	Loaned to RJAF by Iraq as 800/P; served with No. 6 OCU RJAF before return to Hawker

Table 8: Known Attrition of IrAF and RJAF Hunters, 1958-1967

Date	**Air Force/Unit**	**Variant**	**Serial No.**	**Remarks**
20 November 1956	IrAF/No. 6 Sqn	F. Mk6	399	crashed during training flight in UK, 1st Lieutenant G Mahmmoud killed
25 August 1958	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	711/M	crashed during training flight in UK, Lieutenant Farouq Nadim Rajab killed
3 October 1958	IrAF/No. 6 Sqn	F.Mk 6	unknown	crashed during training flight in Iraq, Flight Lieutenant Mufeed Saed killed

1 July 1960	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	701/B	crashed during training flight in Jordan, Lieutenant Jamil Zakaria ejected safely
10 September 1960	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	unknown	crashed during training flight in Jordan, Lieutenant Ali Saleem al-Omari killed
September 1962	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	707/H	crashed during training flight in Jordan
28 July 1964	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	unknown	crashed during training flight in Jordan, 1st Lieutenant Amer Zaza killed
April 1965	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	703/D	crashed during training flight in Jordan
15 August 1965	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	T.Mk 66B	714/P	crashed during training flight in Jordan, 1st Lieutenant Ahmad and 2nd Lieutenant Omeish killed
13 November 1966	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	unknown	shot down in air combat with Mirage IIICJ, 1st Lieutenant Muwafaq Salti killed
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	unknown	shot down in air combat with Mirage IIICJ, Captain Wasfi Ammari ejected but injured
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	700/A	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	702/C	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	704/E	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	705/F	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	706/G	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	708/J	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	709/K	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	710/L	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	715/?	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	717/?	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	805/F	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	806/G	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	807/H	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	809/K	destroyed on the ground
5 June 1967	RJAF/No. 1 Sqn	F.Mk 6	810/L	destroyed on the ground
6 June 1967	IrAF/No 6 Sqn	F.Mk 59	unknown	crashed, Captain Mohammed Abdel Wahed Yuzbaki killed
7 June 1967	IrAF/squadron unknown	F.Mk 59	unknown	shot down in air combat with Mirage IIICJ, 1st Lieutenant Galeb al-Hameed al-Qaysee killed

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Interviews with various Algerian, Egyptian, Iraqi and Syrian Air Force officers, pilots, and ground personnel (see Acknowledgments and Endnotes)

NOTES

1 Ministry of Defence File No. 1625/VII/S.6, 14 February 1958.

2 Air Ministry File No. BP.52/F.6/RN, 28 August 1956; Air Ministry File No. S.8(d)/S.1417/Pt.II, 'Hunters for Iraq', 16 January 1957; Air Ministry File No. B.4.51 W/M VCAS to SofS, Document A. U.S. (S), 15 October 1957; Foreign Office No. V 1195/520, 7 March 1958; and Ministry of Defence document 'Background Brief, Assistance to the Royal Iraqi Air Force', 1 February 1958.

3 Sadik and Cooper, *Iraqi Fighters*, p.17; these men probably became the most influential pilots in the history of the Iraqi Air Force. Dulaymee, for example, went on to become the C-in-C IrAF from 1974-1976; Hameed Sha'ban served as C-in-C IrAF from 1976-1977 and again from 1984-1990; and Mohammad Jassem served as C-in-C IrAF from 1979-1984. Many episodes from their subsequent careers will be described in later volumes of this series.

4 Air Ministry File No. BP.52/F.6/RN, 28 August 1956; Air Ministry File No. S.8(d)/S.1417/Pt.II, 'Hunters for Iraq', 16 January 1957; Air Ministry File No. B.4.51 W/M VCAS to SofS, Document A. U.S. (S), 15 October 1957; Foreign Office No. V 1195/520, 7 March 1958; and Ministry of Defence document 'Background Brief, Assistance to the Royal Iraqi Air Force', 1 February 1958.

5 Air Ministry File 'Hunters for Iraq', including No. 1066, 2 September 1957, and No. 1411, 17 November 1957. An Annex to Air Ministry File No. 1625/S.6, 12 December 1957, budgeted the cost for every Hunter F.Mk 6 equipped with Mk 8 gunsight at £122,500 (including £1,000 per aircraft for modification with Mk 8 gun-sight), the cost of three-months spares package at £63,000; interest for three months pending the first Iraqi payment, calculated starting with 1 January 1957 (at 7 percent per annum) at £22,530; and the costs for preparation of the aircraft and their delivery to Iraq at £10,000. Note that available records in the Air Ministry archive only provide an indication of US interest in supporting the Iraqi purchase through an Offshore Procurement Credit: they do not mention this being granted, but refer only to the Iraqi decision to pay for 10 additional Hunters. Pending the availability of corresponding documentation, the usual reports that the US provided the financing for these aircraft cannot be confirmed. Additional details from Air Ministry Files No. 1522, 12 December 1957, No. 1394/S.6, 13 December 1957, and No. 1547, 15 December 1957. Further to selling 10 additional Hunters to Iraq, the British also agreed to invest £32,300 for strengthening and lengthening of the runway at Habbaniyah, so that this would enable the operations of Hunters at full loads, as indicated under Paragraph 9 of Air Ministry File 'Tel. No. Temple Bar 1215', 15 January 1958.

6 Ar-Razzaq, interview, April 2002.

7 Katerberg/Gravemaker, 'Königliche Jordanische Luftwaffe (RJAF), *Fliegerrevue Extra*, Vol.15, December 2006.

8 Diary of No. 1 Squadron RJAF, RJAF Yearly Diary and the Records of the Hashemite Dynasty.

9 Ministry of Defence File 'Assistance to the Royal Jordanian Air Force, Background Brief', 1 February 1958.

10 Firas Ajlouni was born in 1936 in Anjara, near Irbid. He joined the Royal Jordanian Air Corps in 1954, received primary flight training in Jordan and then underwent several courses in the UK. For details, see 'Jordanian Minister Cancels Lectures on Martyr Ajlouni in Jordanian Schools', Fenks.info, 9 October 2014.

11 'P.S. to S. Of S.', Ministry of Defence Document, 27 February 1958; Air Ministry File No. 393, From Baghdad to Foreign Office, 7 March 1958; Green & Fricker, *The Air Forces of the World*, p8.

12 Ministry of Defence Document Trafalgar 8811, tn. 6237, 27 February 1958; Ministry of Defence File No. A.W.P./M(58)14, 6 March 1958; Ministry of Supply File Air A.1(b), Room 338, 'Hunter VI Armament Trials in Iraq', 12 March 1958; and Air Ministry File No. T.S.622/D.G.O, by AVM L.W. Cannon, Director-General of Maintenance Command RAF, 21 March 1958. According to the second of these documents, the Hunter F.Mk 4s slated for delivery to Iraq had serials XF303, XF307, XF311, XF320, XF324, XF301, XF302, XF306, XF308, XF309, XF312-316, XF323, XF217-219, as well as WW654, WT746, WV257, XV321, XV322, XV357, XV358, XV304 and XV291-XV300. Most were powered by Avon 121, but some - including XF302, XF306, XF308, XF309, XF314, and XF315-317 - had the slightly older Avon 115 engine, while XV291-XV300 were all powered by Avon 113. Four additional aircraft - WV374, WV377, WV382 and WV383 (all Avon 113-powered) - were to be held as reserve for this deal. Ministry of Defence Document A.254770/O.A.1, further noted that if all these aircraft were to be re-equipped with Mk 8 gunsights, the related work would cause a postponement of four months.

13 Air Ministry File No. 742, Addressed to Baghdad Telegram No.742, 17 March 1958.

14 Ministry of Defence File No. 1625/VII/S.6, 14 February 1958.

15 Ibid, p.3.

16 Ministry of Defence, P.S. to S. of S., 'U.S./U.K. Arms Supplies for Iraq', 17 January 1958.

17 Prime Minister as-Said escaped, only to be arrested and executed one day later.

18 Jalal al-Awqati served as CO 1st Army Division in the late 1940s, before joining the RIrAF, where he served as CO Flying College before an early retirement in May 1951. He was reactivated and returned to service on 14 July 1958, apparently on Qasim's personal wish. *History of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Part 17*, p.93.

19 Based entirely on *History of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Part 17; The Establishment of the Iraqi Air Force and its Development*. Note that not all the COs of various RIrAF flying units were removed from their positions during or immediately following the 14 Tammuz Revolution. Some of them were replaced weeks or even months later.

20 Ar-Razzaq, interview, April 2002.

21 Munthir al-Windawi was not directly related to Jamal al-Windawi, who participated in the first Hunter course at RAF Chivenor, but they both belonged to the same clan.

22 *History of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Part 17*, p.108.

23 Sadik and Cooper, *Iraqi Fighters*, pp.39-40.

24 'The King Chasers', *Time Magazine*, 24 November 1958.

25 Ministry of Defence File 'Assistance to the Royal Jordanian Air Force, Background Brief', 1 February 1958.

26 Ibid.

27 It was for this reason that the official history of the RJAF cites 1958 as the date on which No. 1 Squadron was established, even if a unit with this designation had existed since 1956 - albeit as a Vampire outfit.

28 Merchav-Aviri website, retrieved from http://www.merchav-aviri.org/pages/content/view/851/34/ in August 2009.

29 The last few RJAF Vampires were stored at Mafraq AB, and at least two of them were claimed as 'destroyed' by Israeli pilots during the June 1967 War.

30 This spate of defections apparently followed two from Saudi Arabia that occurred just a few weeks earlier, obviously inspired by similar motives. On 1 October 1962, a Royal Saudi Air Force crew of three flew their Fairchild C-123 Provider transport from Jeddah in Saudi Arabia to Aswan in Egypt. Only three days later, another Saudi crew defected to Egypt flying a North American T-28 Trojan training aircraft. Apparently, all the Jordanian and Saudi aircraft were silently returned to their rightful owners a few weeks later.

31 Cooper et al, *Arab MiGs Vol.5*, p.16.

32 Sadik and Cooper, *Iraqi Fighters*, p.47.

33 *History of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Part 17*, various chapters, and O'Ballance, *The Third Arab-Israeli War*, pp.178-79. O'Ballance estimated that over 2,000 out of 8,000 commissioned Iraqi military officers were purged, executed or forced into retirement between 1958 and 1963.

34 Indeed, Salem pursued a very successful career in Jordan, eventually serving a term as the C-in-C RJAF from 1973 until his retirement in 1976.

35 Confidential Telegram No. 552, from the British Embassy in Baghdad to the Foreign Office in London, 21 May 1963, Air Ministry Files.

36 Confidential Telegram from the British Embassy to Baghdad to the Foreign Office in London, 30 May 1963, Air Ministry Files.

37 Sadik & Cooper, *Iraqi Fighters*, p.28.

38 To make matters worse, Israel simultaneously began to pump saline water and sludge from the bottom of Lake Tiberias into the River Jordan – with disastrous consequences for the local environment and the kingdom of Jordan. At first, the salinity of the water began to increase, greatly reducing the amount of irrigation water available, and then the total water flow reduced to such a degree that the River Jordan nearly disappeared and the water level of the Dead Sea has been in constant decline ever since.

39 Diary of No. 1 Squadron, RJAF.

40 While Captain Firas Ajlouni was decorated with the Kawkab Medal, Matta, Zaza and Smadi earned themselves the Independence Medal.

41 Aloni, *Israeli Mirage and Nesher Aces* (Oxford: Osprey, 2004), p.88, Aloni, *Israeli Air Force 101 First Fighter Squadron*, (Kfar Tavor: IsraDecal, 2010), pp.80-81.

42 Noe that the Jordanians are convinced that the nickname 'Starfighter' was used only by West Germans and in relation to the much more advanced F-104Gs. In the RJAF's nomenclature, the type was always designated 'F-104', but never 'Starfighter'.

43 Bowen, *Six Days*, pp.26-30.

44 Ibid., pp.26-30.

45 This and recollections of other involved RJAF Hunter pilots about the Israelis firing two Matra R.530 air-to-air missiles during this battle indicate that the claim for this weapon to have achieved a '50 percent success rate' in combat, as published by Aloni in *Israeli Mirage and Nesher Aces,* p.15 – supposedly because out of two ever fired, one scored a kill (destroying an Egyptian MiG-19S on 29 November 1966) – is unrealistic.

46 Abdeen, interview with Group73, December 2011. Separately, in an interview with Ramez Yaghnam – in the course of research for an article on F-104s in service with the RJAF, subsequently published in the aviation magazine *Zipper* in 2001 – Abdeen recalled the name of the Israeli pilot shot down by him as 'Gidon Aror'. The Israeli managed to eject safely.

47 Adding plenty of salt to the injury, years later, Ran Ronen, the IDF/AF Mirage IIICJ-pilot that shot down Salti, wrote in his memoirs (*Eagle in the Sky*, Contento Now, 2012, p.153) that, 'Muafiks [sic] widow, who is still living in Amman, placed a request through official UN channels to meet with the Israeli pilot who had defeated her husband in dogfight.' Co-author Salti never issued any such request (nor did any other official or unofficial Jordanian authority do anything of that kind) and this lie offended her massively. On the contrary, even when Israel and Jordan signed a peace treaty in 1994, and several Israelis started making telephone calls asking Salti for interviews and to meet Ronen, she flatly refused any such contacts. Ignoring her decision, the Israelis in question continued insisting until Salti requested the Hashemite Royal Family to make a stop to such practices; not only that Ronen never 'defeated her husband in a dogfight', but as of 2012, that Salti had not been living in Amman for years.

48 Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, pp.79-85.

49 For details on this document, see Uri Bar-Noi, *The Soviet Union and the Six-Day War: Revelations From the Polish Archives*, Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, e-Dossier No. 8, based on *'On Soviet Policy Following the Israeli Aggression in the Middle East'*, by Comrade L.I. Brezhnev to the Plenum of the Central Committee of the CPSU, 20 June 1967, Archiwum Akt Nowych (Polish document describing the speech given by Brezhnev to the Pleum of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the actions undertaken by the Soviet leadership before and during the 1967 Arab-Israeli War).

50 Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, p.109.

51 According to the personal notes of Patricia Salti, the first batch of Starfighters delivered to Jordan consisted of six aircraft, of which five arrived in Jordan in early June. However, one of the RJAF pilots was killed in an F-104 during training in the USA, and a second crashed with his Starfighter only days after their delivery to Jordan. Therefore, only four were evacuated to Turkey. Note that in his memoirs, *My War with Israel*, King Hussein recalled that six F-104s were delivered to Amman in early June – which is contradicted by practically all the US sources that provide more information about this topic.

52 The RJAF is one of only very few air forces around the world – also including Sudan – that insures its military aircraft.

53 Sources differ in regards of the timing of this evacuation of Starfighters to Turkey. According to King Hussein, this occurred on 4 June. According to most of the other sources — primarily 'Timely Withdrawal of US Mission', *Flight International*, 29 June 1967, p.1,082; O'Ballance, *The Third Arab-Israeli War*, p.61; and Bowen, *Six Days*, p.96 – it occurred on 3 June. Note that because they cited King Hussein, O'Ballance and Bowen both mentioned six F-104s as delivered to Jordan and then evacuated to Turkey, while *Flight International* mentioned only four. The reason for this difference was the loss of one example during training in the USA, and the other in Jordan, both of which occurred shortly before the war. What is certain is that the RJAF pilots returned to Mafraq from their training in the USA on 4 June, around 2300 local time.

54 Saif-ul-Azam, e-mail interview, April 2008.

55 Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, pp.108-09, and Sadik, various interviews, 2004–2007.

56 Based on *History of the Iraqi Armed Forces, Part 17* (various chapters).

57 M.S. - former IrAF Hunter and MiG-21 pilot, interview provided on condition of anonymity, March 2007; this and all subsequent quotations - as far as related or explained otherwise - are based on transcriptions of the same interview. Note that the authors decided that, with a few specific exceptions, the names of all former IrAF pilots interviewed in the course of research for this book will be withheld. The reason for this decision is a series of assassinations of former IrAF pilots and officers going on since 2003 (in the course of which more than 160 pilots and officers were assassinated), but also their prosecution by the new Iraqi, as well as Iranian, Israeli, Jordanian and Syrian authorities.

58 Ibid & Sadik, various interviews, 2004–2007.

59 Shurdom, interview with Patricia Salti, May 2007, and Shurdom, interview, January and February 2012; this and all subsequent quotations from Shurdom are based on transcriptions of the same interviews.

60 For details about Operation Rashid, see Cooper et al, *Arab MiGs, Volume 1*, pp.176-78.

61 Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, p.123, citing King Hussein from Vance and Lauer's book *My War with Israel* (New York: Morrow Publishing, 1969). Interestingly, the latter book remains the only available source for the existence of such message from Cairo to Amman.

62 Bowen, *Six Days*, p.113; note that some of the interviewed former RJAF pilots privately pointed at the commander of the RJAF, Maj Saleh Kurdi, as a source for this decision.

63 Zayyad's statement in this regard is supported by the recollections of Saif-ul-Azam and Ihsan Shurdom.

64 When interviewed by Patricia Salti and asked about this incident, in 2008, Saleh Kurdi denied all knowledge and stressed that this was the first time he had heard this story. He further said that there was no reason for him

to hold the keys of ammunition depots in Mafraq. Nevertheless, the same story has been provided to the authors by several other sources, independently.

65 Azam, interview, April 2007, and Yasin Khan, *A Sword for Hussain*, published on the internet, 30 September 2004.

66 Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, p.123.

67 Hussein, *My War with Israel*, p.66, and Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, pp.123-24.

68 Mutawi, *Jordan in the 1967 War*, p.124.

69 Ibid, p.126.

70 Indeed, according to many eyewitnesses, Radio Baghdad was the first Arab media outlet to report an Israeli attack on Egypt, doing so around 0850 Cairo time on 5 June 1967.

71 Mohsen, interview with Group73, October 2010. Additional details in this sub-chapter are from Sadik, interview, March 2007.

72 Note that Mohsen and Sadik recalled the composition of these two formations in different fashion, Mohsen not recalling that al-Khither flew with him, but Sadik providing notes based on al-Khither's logbook in support of his version.

73 M.S. - former IrAF Hunter and MiG-21 pilot, interview provided on condition of anonymity, March 2007.

74 'As the News Broke', *Jerusalem Post* (English edition), 6 June 1967.

75 See Hussein, *My War with Israel*, where the author clearly stated that the IrAF Hunters passed over Mafraq while the RJAF Hunters were still in the process of rolling for take-off. Furthermore, Saif-ul-Azam recalled having seen Iraqi Hunters on their way to Israel before he took off. Wasfi Ammari saw them, as well as Major General Saqer (ret.), who served at the Ajloun radar station on that day.

76 Ilan Warshai & Noam Hartoch, 'Nord 2501 Noratlas in IAF Service', *Kne-Mida* ('*In Scale*', IPMS Israel Magazine), No. 47 (12/2007), and Cohen, *Israel's Best Defence*, pp.218-19.

77 Note that in an interview to Patricia Salti in 1994, Major General Saqer, former air controller of the RJAF, recalled this formation to have consisted of four Hunters flown by Firas Ajlouni, Jasser Zayyad, George Matta and Ghazi Smadi.

78 '7 Hurt in Air Attack on Netanya', *Jerusalem Post* (English edition), 6 June 1967; the article cited Hunters that attacked the ABIC insecticide and animal pharmaceutical plant with unguided rockets. The area hit by RJAF Hunters on 5 June 1967 is now occupied by a large IKEA warehouse.

79 Nasri Jumean and Farouq el-Abdeen are known to have flown a sortie around this time too. Sadly, while helping the authors with a number of answers to their other questions, Abdeen never answered the question about this mission. Hanna Najjar is known to have been the last Hunter pilot of No.1 Squadron, RJAF, to take off from Mafraq on that day, and the last to land at Amman IAP; see below for details.

80 Cohen, *Israel's Best Defence*, p.221.

81 Ammari's logbook – put on display at the Museum of Mafraq AB – registered two missions on that day: a CAP in the early morning, lasting 55 minutes, and another mission around noon, lasting 35 minutes. The latter ended following an encounter with four Mirages, after which he had to bail out. Ammari subsequently flew airliners for Alia Airlines.

82 Aloni, *The June 1967 Six-Day War*, pp.140-41; Jasser Zayyad recalled having seen the wreckage of Boleh's Mystère IVA with the body of the dead pilot still inside the cockpit. He recalled that inside one of the pockets on Boleh's flying overalls there were intelligence maps of Amman IAP and Mafraq that were so up-to-date, that they showed objects constructed only after Jasser left for F-104-training in the USA in early 1967.

83 Aloni, *The June 1967 Six-Day War*, pp.145-46.

84 Shoubat, interview to Patricia Salti, Amman, 2007; Shoubat retired from the RJAF in 1981.

85 Barjis al-Hadid, interview to Patricia Salti, Amman, 2007.

86 According to Faysal Abdul Mohsen, the leader of this formation failed to find Lod and thus attacked an alternative target in the Tel Aviv area. According to Ahmad Sadik, the formation only strafed an Israeli military column on the road to Jerusalem, but came back with most of its rockets and gun ammo still attached to the aircraft.

87 The Iraqi officers interviewed for this project were quite surprised by the lack of Israeli intelligence about H-3. To them it was 'well known' that Moshe Dayan 'visited' H-3 in 1941, while serving with the British Army. Furthermore, they recalled that several times during the 1950s and 1960s, Israeli B-17s overflew the place, and that the IrAF concluded that they had taken reconnaissance photographs of it.

88 Aloni, *The June 1967 Six-Day War*, and Bowen, *Six Days*, pp.157-58.

89 Sadik, interview, March 2007. The An-12B destroyed by the Israelis during their first attack on H-3 was serial number 508.

90 There is still much uncertainty - perhaps even controversy - concerning the background of the orders for subsequent IDF/AF attacks on H-3. Sadly, after granting an interview to Lon Nordeen in November 1987, Somech turned down all subsequent requests for interviews regarding this and other missions against H-3.

91 Sadik, interview, March 2007.

92 Majid al-Turki continued a successful career with the IrAF for two years longer. Sadly, he was executed on orders from Saddam Hussein al-Tikriti in 1969, under the pretext of 'conspiracy against the state'.

93 The IrAF report in question apparently leant upon at least some of the Israeli media reports, but also various printed publications. The best available example of media reports is 'Killed in Explosion of Bomb they were Guarding', *Jerusalem Post* (English edition), 8 June 1967.

94 'Woman Killed, 21 wounded in Netanya Bombing', *Jerusalem Post* (English edition), 7 June 1967.

95 According to the IrAF post-mission report, as cited by Sadik during an interview in March 2007, Hussein's Tu-16 was first hit by a Matra R.530 missile (not by one of the Sharfir Mk.Is, as reported by the Israelis), which fused and caused some damage to one of the engines. Eventually, so the Iraqis conclude, it was shot down by a HAWK SAM-site protecting Ramat David AB. The same report concluded that the Israelis credited this Tu-16 to the crews of their Bofors guns because so many of these were killed in the crash of the bomber on their base.

96 'As the News Broke', *Jerusalem Post* (English edition), 8 June 1967.

97 Namiq Saadallah continued a successful career with the IrAF and flew MiG-21s during the October 1973 War with Israel, when he claimed one Mirage III as shot down over Syria, at an unknown date. Samarrai continued flying Hunters and served as deputy squadron commander, but was shot down and killed by Israeli Mirages over Sinai on 8 October 1973.

98 As recalled by Azam, interview, April 2008. From his and Jumean's descriptions of events at Habbaniyah AB, it appears that King Hussein did not make any calls to President Arif on the evening of 5 June, as promised when meeting the survivors of No.1 Squadron, RJAF, but did so only after his pilots arrived in Iraq.

99 According to the IrAF post-mission report, as cited by Sadik during an interview in March 2007.

100 Sadik, interview, March 2007.

101 Colonel Hamid Sha'ban continued a particularly successful career with the IrAF, being appointed its CO for two terms in the 1970s and 1980s. Two of his Hunter pilots from the June 1967 War, 1st Lieutenant Hassan al-Khither and 1st Lieutenant Najdat an-Naqeeb, rose almost as high. Khither reached the position of Director of Operations IrAF (effectively a Deputy CO of the Air Force), and was replaced by Naqeeb. Saadallah served with the IrAF until the October 1973 War with Israel, when he claimed a kill against an Israeli fighter during an air battle over the Golan Heights. Sadly, he was killed in action only a few days later. Zainal was

forced to flee to Syria following the coup in Baghdad, in 1969. He joined the SyAAF, reached the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and was appointed the CO of MiG-17-equipped No. 2 Squadron. He was shot down and killed in an air combat with Israeli Mirages, on 13 October 1973.

102 Some Israeli sources reported that the Noratlas had been fired upon by SA-2s – even though neither Iraq nor Syria operated these weapons at that time.

103 Following the June 1967 War, Saif-ul-Azam was decorated the Wisam-al-Istigal (Order of Independence) Medal in Jordan, as well as the Nowt al-Shuja'a (Medal of Bravery) in Iraq and Sitara-i-Basalat (Star of Courage) in Pakistan. Having already scored a kill against a Fowland Gnat lightweight fighter of the Indian Air Force during the 1965 Kashmir War, he became the only pilot ever to be credited with confirmed kills while flying fighters of three different air forces. After the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, as a born Bengali, Azam eventually donned the uniform of yet another air force when transferring to his new homeland, Bangladesh, where he is living today.

104 Shurdom, interview, May 2007. Ihsan Shurdom continued a successful career with the RJAF, eventually reaching the rank of major general and position of the Chief of Staff RJAF. He is now living in Jordan.

105 According to the IrAF post-mission report, as cited by Sadik during an interview in March 2007 and Mohsen, interview with Group 73, October 2010.

106 According to Sadik, Captains Dror and Glantz-Golan were transferred to the Iraqi Military Intelligence HQ, in Baghdad, immediately after their capture. Separated from each other, they were interrogated by an Iraqi Hebrew-linguist. Dror refused to cooperate, while Glantz-Golan explained 'quite a lot' about his training 'for a year and a half on models of what were exact replicas of the objectives they would have to attack', about the results of Iraqi attacks on Kfar-Sirkin and Ramat David AB, and about the first two Israeli attacks on H-3. Furthermore, both Israelis had with them small books with detailed intelligence on all the major air bases in Egypt, Jordan and Syria, and showing all the routes used by their units to attack these. Notably, in the course of the same POW exchange when Dror and Glantz-Golan were returned to Israel, Israel returned the bodies of the IrAF Tu-16 crew killed when their aircraft was shot down near Megiddo on the morning of 6 June.

107 Only official US researchers working on topics related to the Iran-Iraq War and US wars with Iraq, in the 1980s-2000s period, are permitted to have an insight. US troops destroyed and looted a small museum commemorating the air battle over H-3 of 7 June 1967: located in the basement of the Iraqi Military Intelligence HQ building (the 'Israeli Section Office'), this included a large part of a Mirage wing with the Star of David – cut off the aircraft flown by the 'second Ezra' - the ejection seats from downed Israeli fighters and an Israeli flag. One of two helmets on display there belonged to an IDF/AF Vautour pilot killed that day – either Captain Keren or Captain Inbar – and had the name of its former wearer written on it, using a plastic ribbon. Attached to the helmet was a small piece of paper stating, 'Pilot's helmet model HGU/2A-P, manufactured in 1966, large, number 16631, Oz Light Plastics, Azor Industrial Area, Azor'. Azor is a small Israeli town west of Tel Aviv. The helmet in question was sent to Israel. It is because of such circumstances that the information presented in this book remains incomplete, largely based on recollections of participants and only partially supported by official documentation or official publications.

108 Sadik, interview, March 2007.

109 See IDF/AF Document AG-10-428, p.44, Table 40: Total Loss of Enemy Aircraft. Details from this document – in which the IDF/AF concluded it had destroyed 471 Arab aircraft between 6-10 June 1967 - have been widely published in Israeli and foreign press ever since, and are considered 'definitive', although nobody has so far cross-examined them with official Arab documentation.

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